

TALES OF A GRANDMOTHER

BY GEORGE SAND

Translated by

MARGARET BLOOM, Ph.D.



Illustrated in Color by Harold W. Hess

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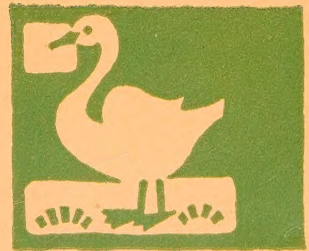
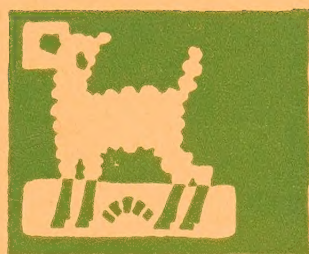
By George Sand

Translated by Margaret Bloom, Ph. D.

Here are five long stories which a famous French author wrote for her grandchildren, stories little known in America, which will enchant every child. Twelve color plates and many black and white illustrations.



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Tales of a Grandmother



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By George Sand

translated by

Margaret Bloom, Ph.D.

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Illustrated by Harold W. Hess

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Contents

Wings of Courage

Page 3

Queen Coax

Page 97

The Rosy Cloud

Page 129

The Giant Yéous

Page 167

The Castle of Pictordu

Page 215



Illustrations

She Saw the Dancer Leave the Wall and Come Towards Her	frontispiece
The Tailor Placed Clopinet on His Donkey and Started on His Way	10
Laquille Took Clopinet to the Fishing	26
Clopinet Commenced to Love These Wild Birds	52
"Stop, Don't Harm That Creature!"	110
My Enchantments Saved Me from Death	116
"That," said Father Bataille, "Is What I'd Have Called a Squall"	138
"Spin the Finest Yarn You Can," Her Aunt Told Her	154
I Found Myself Face to Face with a Handsome Mountaineer	168
Madame Laura Came in, as Smart as Usual	272
Blanche's Husband Appeared, Calling His Dogs	296
Diana Collected Rare Plants for Her Old Friend	300

The Wings of Courage



To

AURORE AND GABRIELLE SAND

This time, dear young ladies, the story will be long; you've ordered it so. If you fall asleep listening to it, we'll finish it another day, on condition that you remember what came before. Aurore has asked that the stage be set in a place you've seen in your travels. That doesn't give me much of a choice. I'm obliged to bring you to Normandy, where you've become acquainted with the flowery marsh, we'll sally forth from those still waters, and we'll go see; that rose and blue sea you loved even more. Take your knitting or your cut paper-work, and be good, but interrupt when you don't understand. I'll make myself clear in spoken words, which are always clearer than written ones. You want to have some of the marvelous in my story. There'll be a little of it, but it's on condition that there'll also be true things which all the world doesn't know. You'll not be sorry to learn them, no more than your big cousins. Nature is a store of marvels, my dear children, and every time one pokes one's nose into it, even just a little way, it's astonishing what it reveals.

The Wings of Courage

I

THERE were in the lands of the district of Auge, on one side of Saint-Pierre-d'Azif, three leagues from the sea, an honest countryman and his wife who, by dint of hard work, had become quite well-off. In those days, that is to say about a hundred years ago, the region was not very well cultivated. There were pastures and then more pastures, with apple-trees and still more apple-trees; a wide countryside quite flat, as far as the eye can reach, and now and then a little hazel copse, with a small garden and a house of wood and mud, stone being scarce. There fine cows are bred, good butter is made and famous cheeses. But, as there were then neither highways nor railways, nor all those country-houses one sees today on the coast, the peasant hadn't many ideas and found out nothing to increase or vary the products of the soil.

The man I'm telling you about was named Doucy and his wife was called Mother Doucette. They had many children who like their parents worked, one and all; found out nothing new, and didn't complain about anything. They were all very good, very easy-going, very indifferent, not doing anything quickly, but always doing something and able in time to set aside a little money to buy land.

There was a single one of them named Clopinet, who didn't work at all, or almost not. It wasn't that he was weak or sick. He was ruddy and strong, although a little lame, with a very pretty face as rosy as an apple. It wasn't, more-

over, that he was disobedient or lazy. He was not mischievous at all and wasn't afraid of giving himself trouble. But he had an idea of his own, and this idea was to be a sailor. If he had been asked what it meant to be a sailor, he would have found it hard to say. He was scarcely ten years old when this idea entered his head, and this is how it happened.

He had an uncle, his mother's brother, who when quite young had sailed away on a merchantman and seen many lands. This uncle, settled down on the seacoast near Trouville, came at long intervals to see the Doucy family. He told of many strange things which perhaps weren't all true, but of which Clopinet wasn't at all doubtful, so beautiful did they appear to him. It was thus that he got the idea of traveling and developed a very great longing to go to sea, although he had never seen the ocean and didn't know just what it was.

It wasn't far, though, and he could have walked that distance, as his lameness didn't trouble him at all. However, his father wasn't anxious to see him take a liking for travel, and it wasn't the practice of the peasants of this period to leave their native place, unless driven by necessity. The elder brothers went to the fairs and markets when occasion arose. Meanwhile, the younger one looked after the cows and it was never Clopinet's turn to go for a ramble. He was bored and became quite a dreamer. When he drove the cattle to pasture, instead of devising some pastime, like making rush baskets or building little houses out of earth and bits of wood, he looked at the clouds and especially the migratory birds who come this way on their journey to or from the sea. "Are they happy, those creatures?" he said to himself.

"They have wings and go where they please. They see how the world is made, and they never get bored."

By dint of watching the birds, he could distinguish them by their manner of flying, however high they were in the sky. He knew their mode of travel, how the cranes formed themselves into an arrow to cleave through the air-currents, how the starlings flew in close array, how the birds of prey hovered, and how the wild geese followed each other in line at equal distance. He was always happy to see the birds of passage come, and he often tried to run as fast as they flew. It was labor in vain; he hadn't taken ten steps before they had covered a league and were lost to view.

Whether because of his lameness, or because he was not naturally brave, Clopinet did not absent himself at all from the house and did nothing to match up his bravery with his curiosity. One day the sailor uncle came to visit the family and Clopinet spoke of going with him to see the ocean, if his papa was willing to permit it:

"You?" said Father Doucy laughing: "hold your tongue, will you! you aren't able to walk and you're afraid of everything. Don't ever bother yourself with this lad here, brother! he's puny and chicken-hearted. Last year, he was hidden all one day in the fagots, because a chimney-sweep, a little smeared, passed by whom he took for the devil. He can't look without crying at the tailor who comes to make our clothes, because the man is hump-backed. A dog that growls, a cow that looks at him, an apple that falls, that's what makes him fly away. You could truly say that here's one who came into the world with wings of fear fixed to his shoulders."

"That will pass, that will pass," answered Uncle La-

quille—which was the sailor's name, "when you're a child, you have wings of fear; later, others grow."

These words astonished little Clopinet greatly. "I haven't any wings at all," he said. "My papa's joking; but perhaps they'd grow on me if I went to sea!"

"Then," said Father Doucy, "your uncle must have them. Ask him to show them to you!"

"I have them when there's need of them," replied the sailor with a modest air. "But there are wings of courage for flying from danger."

Clopinet found these sentiments very fine, and never forgot them; but Father Doucy took down the pride of his brother-in-law by saying: "I'm not saying that you haven't those wings when it's up to you to do your duty. But when you return home, you haven't such stout ones. Your wife clips them for you!"

Father Doucy said that because Mother Laquille directed the household, while on the contrary Mother Doucette was very well named and entirely under her husband's thumb.

On account of that, this good woman did not dare to encourage Clopinet's ideas, about which his father was not willing to hear anyone speak. He said that the sailor's calling was too hard for a boy who had one leg weaker than the other. He said, also, that Clopinet, in spite of his good health, would never be a strong enough man to till the soil. He must be taught the tailor's calling, which is a good trade in the country districts.

So one day when the tailor had come to the household, as was his custom every year, Father Doucy said to him: "*Pull-to-the-left*, my friend"—the tailor was so nicknamed because he was left-handed and drew the needle in the opposite direction from the others—"we haven't any work to

give you this year, but here's a young one who'd be overjoyed to learn your trade. I'll pay you something for his apprenticeship, if you're willing to be reasonable and content yourself with what I offer you. A year from now, he'll be able to help you, run your errands; in short, be your little man-servant and earn his keep with you."

"How much is it that you'd give?" asked the tailor regarding Clopinet out of the corner of his eye, with a slightly disdainful air, as if to run down the goods in advance.

While the countryman and the tailor discussed in a low voice the terms of the bargain, and stuck at ten livres of Tours difference, Clopinet, quite taken aback, for never had he had the least desire to sew or cut out, tried to regard calmly the master to whom he was about to be sold. It was a little man with both shoulders humped, both eyes asquint, lame in both legs. If one could have untwisted him and stretched him out on a table, he would have been tall. But he was so broken and so joined at angles that, when he walked, he was no taller than Clopinet himself, who was then twelve years old and not very large for his age. Pull-to-the-left, himself, could very easily have been fifty. His head, enormous in length, yellow and bald-pated, resembled a big cucumber. He was meanly dressed in rags not fit to use again in the clothes of his customers. They would have been thrown in the trash-piles if he had not reclaimed them. What was the most horrid about him, was his hands and his feet. They were very long and very agile, for, with his spindle-arms and his legs set square, he worked and walked more quickly than any one else. The eye could scarcely follow the flash of his big needle when he sewed and the whirlwind of dust he stirred up skimming over the ground when he ran.

Clopinet had seen Pull-to-the-left several times, and had never failed to find him extremely ugly. Now he found the tailor appalling. The fear he had always felt became so strong that he would have made off, if he hadn't thought about those wings of fear they had twitted him with having on his shoulders.

When the bargain was struck, Doucy and the tailor shook hands on it, and drank half a pitcher of cider, clinking their glasses together. Mother Doucette, informed of what was going on, went away, without saying a word, into the other room to make up the bundle of the poor child whom the tailor was going to take from her for three years.

Until then, Clopinet had not understood what was happening to him. He had heard his father say once or twice that it was the plan to give him a handicraft because of the weakness of his leg. He had not thought, however, that it was to be settled so soon and against his own inclination. To contradict his father, to offer resistance, that was something he couldn't think of, for he was mild and submissive. For a while he believed that nothing would be settled without his consent. But when he saw his mother leave the room without looking at him, as if she was afraid of crying before him, he understood his misfortune, and darted after her to beg her to aid him.

He didn't have the time. The tailor stretched out his arm, and seized him as a spider lays hold of a fly. Then, setting him on his hump and clasping his legs in front, Pull-to-the-left started up saying to Father Doucy: "That's right; it's agreed. We'll let the mother cry; she'll cry less when she doesn't see him any more. It'll take her all of an hour to pack up his things. You can send them to me at Dives tomorrow, where I'm going to spend three days. Come now,

young one, keep quiet, and don't you dare cry, or with my good scissors you see hanging at my belt, I'll cut off your tongue."

"Treat him kindly," said the father. "He's not at all ill-natured and will do whatever you say."

"That's fine, that's fine," replied the tailor, "don't be concerned about him; I'll see to him. On our way, on our way! Don't weaken, or I won't take him."

"At least let me kiss him goodby," said Father Doucy, "a child who is going away . . ."

"Why! you'll see him again; he'll be coming back with me to work here. Good-day, good-day; let's not have a scene, or tears, or I'll leave him with you. For what you're paying, I'm not so crazy about the business."

So speaking, Pull-to-the-left leaped out of the door and began to run, with Clopinet on his back, through the apple-trees. The child tried to cry out; but his throat was tight, and his teeth chattered from fear. He looked back in anguish towards his home. It wasn't so much having to obey which distressed him as not to be able to kiss his father and mother, and to say goodby to them. It was this hardship which seemed to him beyond understanding. He saw his mother rush to the door and hold out her arms to him. He succeeded in crying out, "*Mamma!*" in the midst of a choked sob. She took a few steps as if to overtake him. His father held her back, and she fell, pale as death, into the arms of François, her eldest son, who was swearing from grief and shaking his fist at the tailor with a threatening air. Pull-to-the-left only laughed, a horrid laugh which was like the noise of a saw on stone. He quickened his stride, that gigantic, fantastic stride, so that he would not be overtaken.

Clopinet, thinking his mother dead and perceiving that

nothing could save him, wished to die also. He let his head fall on the monstrous shoulder of the tailor and lost consciousness.

Then the tailor, finding Clopinet overly heavy and thinking him asleep, placed him on his donkey, left to graze on the meadow. It was as little, as ugly and as lame as himself. The tailor directed a furious kick at the animal to start it on its way, and did not stop again until three leagues farther on in the sand-dunes.

There he lay down to take a nap, without bothering to see if the child was really sleeping or if he was ill. Clopinet, upon opening his eyes, thought himself alone, and looked around him without understanding where he was. It was a strange spot he had never seen before, nor was it like any other. He found himself enclosed in a grassy hollow overgrown and steep. It was the break in the great gray chalk deposits which stretch between Villers and Beuzeval on the seashore, hiding the sea from the gaze. After a moment of astonishment Clopinet recovered his memory, and his heart tightened as he remembered his removal by the tailor. It bounded with joy, however, at the thought that his captor had abandoned him, so that by looking about a little he could find the way back home.

No sooner thought than done. He got up and took several steps on the broad path which stretched before him. He stopped short cold with terror on beholding Pull-to-the-left lying two paces ahead, one eye asleep but the other watching all Clopinet's movements. The donkey was grazing a little farther on.

Clopinet lay down again forthwith and kept quiet, although his heart was beating very loud. Suddenly he heard a distinct grunting, as if a crow was croaking not far from



THE TAILOR PLACED CLOPINET ON HIS DONKEY AND
STARTED ON HIS WAY

him. He turned around and saw that the tailor was snoring and sleeping for all he was worth, with one eye open. It was his trick, for his blind eye no longer closed; but he was sound asleep none the less. He was fatigued, for the weather was hot.

Clopinet crept along on his knees until close by the tailor, still terrified by this wicked eye which regarded him. He moved his hand in front of it, but it did not budge. Then the child, still crawling, emerged from the hollow. He followed the path and found himself in another larger dell, which the path also crossed. He removed and abandoned his wooden shoes to run the better. All at once, throwing himself in the grass, he left the trail, gained the height, and began to descend the other side as swiftly as a hare, amid a confused mass of bushes and overgrown plants where he was lost and covered over higher than his head. He ran thus for a long time. Then taking it into his head that, if the tailor was trying to find him, he would see the grasses and the leaves moving, he halted, crouched close to the ground where the undergrowth was thickest. There he kept motionless, holding his breath.

These tactics of Clopinet's succeeded very well. Pull-to-the-left, after having slept a sufficiently long time, woke up and saw that his prisoner had escaped him. He found the sabots, did not deign to pick them up, followed for some time the tracks of Clopinet's bare feet, and then went on his way tittering, for this way led to Dives, where the tailor counted on going to spend the night. "This simpleton of a young one," he thought, "fancies he's taking the way home. He didn't know he was turning his back on it. In four strides I'll have retaken him again."

And the tailor, beating and driving his ass before him,

set himself to skimming over the ground with his great twisted legs, which shook like two scythes and worked as fast as two wings. Thanks to the good idea which had occurred to the child to take the opposite direction, the more the tailor hastened, the more he went away from Clopinet.

II

It was dark when Clopinet felt sufficiently reassured to come out of his hiding-place. The spring evening was mild, still and overcast. He listened before stirring and was greatly startled at a strange noise. He imagined it was the terrible step of the tailor which made the sand creak below where he was. At times it resembled the rending of cloth, and he thought again of the tailor tearing stuffs before using his terrible scissors. But the noise began again, always without increasing or diminishing in force and speed, without coming nearer, and without pausing. It was the sea breaking at the foot of the beach. Clopinet did not recognize that sound, and tried to look and make sure as well as possible in the darkness that no one else than himself was in this wilderness. It was for him an unexplainable place. From where he was, raising his head from the bushes, he saw a great semi-circle of dunes of which he was unable to make out the hollows and the sudden dips. They seemed to him to be an immense jagged wall stretching out into emptiness. This emptiness was the sea. As he did not suspect it and the evening mist hid the horizon from him, he did not distinguish the sea from the sky and was merely amazed to see stars in the upper part and strange lights down below. Was this heat-lightning? But how did it come to be under his feet? How could one understand all that when one had seen

nothing, not even a big river or a little mountain? Clopinet took a few steps in the high grass without daring to descend any farther. He was afraid and he was hungry. "I'll have to hunt a place to sleep," he said to himself, "for at the break of day I'll ask the way home and return to see if my poor mother is dead." This thought made him cry, but on remembering that he had been himself all but dead on the back of the tailor, he hoped that his mother would also get over it.

Clopinet did not dare to go to sleep in the first place he came to, for fear of being surprised by the horrible master whom he supposed to be always hot on his heels. He did not think himself far enough from the path by which he would have been able to return homeward. He climbed down, therefore, with caution, and saw that it was more difficult than he had thought. The edge of the dune was not a wall down which he could let himself slide. It was ground all cut up, all cracked and all bristled up like a chestnut. The sharp ends were not firm at all, and gave way in one's grasp when one tried to hang on to them. Then he encountered great crevices hidden by grass and thorns, and was afraid of falling into them. He was not able to avoid certain ones which had water at the bottom, but were fortunately not deep. The night, the solitude and the danger of this treacherous ground, so new for an inhabitant of the plains and so difficult for a lame person, produced in Clopinet a great sense of gloom, and little by little a great terror. He gave up climbing down and tried to go back up again. This was worse. Even though the surface of the soil was dried by the sun and a little strengthened by the thick grass, the side of the treacherous rock was damp and slippery. No foothold could be found and pieces of thick chalk detached them-

selves, letting fall large pebbles which bounded from spot to spot as if dropped from heaven. Quite worn out, the child thought himself lost. He didn't know but what the wolves would come to devour him.

He threw himself down on a thick tuft of moss he encountered, and tried to go to sleep so that he would cheat his hunger. He dreamed he was slipping, and something which passed over him on the run, perhaps a hare, gave him such a fright that he fled, without knowing where, at the risk of falling into a crevice and drowning there. He was no longer in possession of his reason and recognized no longer the things he had seen in the daylight. He went from one hollow to the other, imagining in place of running he was flying over the ground. He came to those great ridges of the dune which had startled him before, and he took them for giants who regarded him shaking their heads. Each dark bush seemed to him a beast crouching, ready to spring on him. Senseless ideas also came to him and recollections of things he had forgotten. Once his uncle, the sailor, had said before him: "When you give yourself to the spirits of the sea, the earth-spirits want nothing more to do with you." And this saying came back to him like a threat. "I've thought too much about the sea," he said to himself, "and see how the land dismisses me and hates me. She tears herself up and splits in all directions under my feet; she forms herself into points which connect up with nothing and want to crush me. I'm lost; I don't know where the sea is, which perhaps would be kinder to me. I don't know in what direction my home is and if I'll ever return there. Perhaps the land is also angry with my parents and they're not alive any longer!"

As he thought that, he heard passing over his head some-

thing very surprising. It was a multitude of little plaintive voices which seemed to call for help. It wasn't like the cries of birds; it was the voices of little children, so sweet and so sad that his grief and distress were increased by them and he called out in answer: "This way, this way, little spirits! Come cry with me or carry me away to cry with you. You're all together to pity each other, and I, I'm all alone."

The tiny voices continued to go by. There were so many of them that they passed overhead for a quarter of an hour without paying attention to Clopinet, although little by little his own voice was pitched in unison with this sweet plaint. Finally the voices became fewer; the great flock receded. Only solitary voices passed now which were delayed and called in a tone full of anguish to wait for them. When Clopinet, who was still running without being able to follow them, heard the one pass which he judged to be the last, he was in despair. These invisible companions of his woe had soothed his sorrow, and he found himself again in the horror of solitude. Then he cried out: "Spirits of the night, spirits of the sea, perhaps; have pity, take me away!"

At the same time with a run and jump he made a strong effort, as if to open his wings. Whether the longing he had for them made him grow wings, or whether all this was a dream of fever or of hunger, he felt himself quit the earth and fly away in the direction that the voyaging spirits took. Carried away in the grayish air, he thought he saw plainly little black arrows which flew before him. Soon he saw nothing save the fog, and he called in vain to the spirits to wait for him. Their voices still advanced, crying all together, but going faster than he and losing themselves amid the clouds. Then Clopinet felt his wings tire, his flight grow heavy. He went down, down, without falling, but without being able

to stop, down to the bottom of the dune. As soon as he touched the ground he moved his arms, and imagined that they were still wings which could set off again when he wasn't tired any longer. But he did not have the leisure to bother himself about them, for what he saw absorbed him to such a degree that he thought almost no more about himself.

The night was still overcast, but not too dark to discern objects near by. He was sitting on very fine and very smooth sand, among big balls round and whitish which he took at first for apple-trees in blossom. When he looked at them more carefully and touched those that were close by, he recognized that they were large stones like those he had seen on the top of the dunes. They had slid, perhaps a long time before, down onto the seashore.

It was a beautiful beach, for at this point the sea came each day as far as the bottom of the sand-hill and scoured the mud which dropped down from the chalky mountain. The sand was, besides, washed in a thousand places by the tiny streamlets of fresh water which filtered through the dune and disappeared noiselessly and without bubbling into the salt water. The tide had not yet quite come in and while he listened to the noise of the waves which drew near, Clopinet no longer saw anything but that long and pale strip of wet sand. It stretched through a multitude of dark masses varying in size and all more or less rounded. Clopinet was afraid no longer; he regarded these motionless heaps in wonder. It was like a flock of huge beasts which were sleeping in front of him. He wished to see them close by and came out on the sand to where he could touch one of them. It was a rock like the one he had just left. But why was it black, while those of the beach were white? He touched

it again and drew towards him something like an enormous bunch of black grapes. He was hungry and bit into it, but found only very hard shells in his mouth. His teeth were good and broke through into excellent little mussels. Forthwith he opened the shells with his knife and satisfied his hunger, for there was an enormous number of these mussels. It was the thick covering of shells which blackened the white flint-stones, fallen like the others from the top and the sides of the dune.

When he had dined well, he felt quite revived and became reasonable again. He did not remember any more having had wings and decided he had slowly rolled the length of the chalk-deposits, thinking he was flying amid the clouds.

Then he climbed on one of the biggest dark rocks and looked to see what there was beyond. He again saw those long pale flashes of lightning shooting by, which he had already seen from above. What could this be? He recalled that his uncle had said that the sea-water often shone like white fire during the night. At length he told himself that what he saw must be the sea. It was quite close and advancing towards the rocks, but so slowly and with a movement so regular and a sound so uniform that the child did not realize the ground it was gaining. He remained on a rock quite easy in mind watching it come and go, advance, fall back, plait itself into big waves, mount to fall back immediately and begin again. Finally it came to be flattened on the strand with that hard and fresh sound which is not without charm on quiet nights and induces sleep, however little one is disposed that way.

Clopinet could not resist it; it was perhaps ten o'clock at night, and he had never been awake so late. His bed of rocks and shells was not exactly soft. But when one is

very tired, where is it one couldn't sleep? For several moments, he fixed his heavy eyes on that thin, silvery sheet which stretched softly on the sand, advancing again at the moment when the wave already was moving back; then being taken up again and pushed ahead still more. Nothing is less alarming than this gentle and treacherous invasion of the rising tide.

Clopinet did notice that the strip of sand narrowed before his eyes and that the little waves began to wash the bottom of his rock. They were so pretty with their fine white foam that he was not at all concerned about it. It was the sea. He saw it, he finally touched it! It wasn't very big, for farther than five or six waves he saw nothing more than a dark strip lost in the mist. There was nothing wicked about the sea. She must know that he had always wished to live with her. Doubtless she was just, for the sailor uncle often spoke of her as a majestic and respectable person. That made Clopinet think he had not yet greeted her, which wasn't at all polite. All weighted down by the sleep which was overtaking him, he lifted his woolen cap politely. Then, letting his head fall again on his extended left arm, he went to sleep, still holding his cap in his right hand.

III

AT THE end of two hours, however, he was awakened by a strange noise. The sea was beating on the rock with so much force that it seemed to shake, and Clopinet no longer could see any rock at all. He saw a great hem of foam all around him. The tide was high, and the child did not at all understand what had happened to him. He tried to escape on the side by which he had come, but there was as much

water on one side as the other and all the black boulders had entirely disappeared. The tide mounted to the foot of the white rocks, and seemed inclined to mount still higher. Clopinet tried putting his legs in the water to see if it was deep. He felt no bottom, but he saw that, if he let go of the rock, the wave was going to sweep him away. Then, he felt he was really lost, thought of his mother and closed his eyes so that he would not see himself die.

All at once he heard above him the little voices which had called him on the dune, and his courage came back to him. He had already flown down from above; he could certainly fly up again. He imitated the cry of those invisible spirits. They hovered over him as if they were circling to call him and were waiting for him. Again he made a strong effort with his arms, which held him up like wings, and rose into the air. He thought he wasn't flying very high and that he was skimming over the sea, coming, going, dipping into the waves, lighting on the rock, beginning again to fly about, to swim, and enjoying it all immensely. The seawater felt warm to him. He kept himself afloat without effort as if he had been doing nothing else all his life, and then he had the desire to see beneath. He folded his wings and dipped down his head. The water was all white fire which did not burn. Finally he felt tired, and, returning to his rock, he went soundly asleep, lulled by the glorious sound of the waves and by the sweet voice of the spirits, which continued to make little childlike cries in the air.

When he woke up, the sun was coming up amid a silvery haze which was rising in great strips around the horizon. A fresh breeze rippled the green sea, and towards the east there were great rose and lilac billows. The horizon cleared itself rapidly. The rock where Clopinet had slept was suf-

ficiently high so that he could see how large the sea was. It was less calm than the evening before, but it was much farther back. He wanted to see it close by in broad daylight, and ran along the sand, little concerned over wetting his feet in the great puddles the sea had left. He wasn't satisfied until he was in them up to his knees. He picked up a quantity of different shells which were all very pretty. Then he went back to the foot of the sand-hill to drink at the springs which were a little brackish but less biting than the sea-water he had tasted. He was so glad to see that great thing of which he had dreamed so much, that he thought no longer of returning home. He had almost forgotten all that had happened to him the day before. He went back and forth on the shore, looking at everything, touching everything, trying to understand everything. He saw barks pass in the distance, and knew what they were, making out the sailors who manned them and the sails which the wind swelled. He even saw a great vessel on the horizon and thought it was a church. But it traveled along like the barks, and his heart beat very fast at the sight. There was, then, a vessel, one of those floating houses in which his uncle had gone to sea! Clopinet would have liked to be on this ship and see where the sea ended, beyond the gray line which separated it from the sky.

He was not thinking any longer about the tailor, but he became frightened again because of a person he saw in the distance, walking along the beach and coming in his direction. He was reassured very speedily, however, on perceiving that it was a man of ordinary build. He thought he recognized his elder brother François, the one who, the day before, had shaken his fist at the tailor, for François detested the tailor and dearly loved his little Clopinet.

It was he, it was truly he, and Clopinet ran to meet him to throw himself in his brother's arms. "And where did you come from, where did you spring from?" cried François, hugging him. "It's only seven o'clock in the morning. You aren't here from Dives. Where then did you spend the night?"

"There, on the big black stone," answered Clopinet.

"What! on the Great-Cow?"

"It's not a cow, dear François. It's a really truly rock."

"Oh, I know that! Don't you know that those stones there are called the Black-Cows? But during the tide, where were you?"

"I don't know what you mean."

"The sea rises as far as here, as far as these stones which are called the White-Cows."

"Oh, yes, I saw that, but the sea-spirits kept me from getting drowned."

"You mustn't say foolish things, Clopinet! there are no sea-spirits. On the land, I'm not saying . . ."

"Whether they belong to the land or to the sea," replied Clopinet with animation, "I'm telling you they helped me."

"You saw them?"

"No, I heard them. And here I am safe and sound. I've even slept well right in the midst of the water."

"Then you can say you've had good luck! I know very well that the Great-Cow there, as it's the highest, is the only one that the tide doesn't entirely cover when the sea is calm. But if the least squall had come, the water would have covered it, and it would have been all over with you, my poor child."

"Nonsense! I can swim very well, dive, fly over the waves. It's great fun."

"Come, come! You're talking nonsense. Your clothes aren't wet. You've been afraid; you've been hungry and cold. Still you don't look ill. Eat the bread I have with me, and drink a good draught of cider from my bottle-gourd. Then you shall tell me sensibly how you got away from this dog of a tailor, for you've certainly escaped from his clutches."

Clopinet told all that had happened. "Well," said François, "I'm overjoyed that he didn't have the time to torture you, for he's a wicked man. I know he's been the death of apprentices by using them ill and by not giving them enough to eat. Father won't believe what I tell him, and he's persuaded mother that I've a grudge against that man and am not telling the truth about him. You know she's very much afraid of father and whatever he wants goes with her. She cried all day yesterday and didn't eat. But this morning she listened to him. Both of them are sure you're over your grief as they are, and that you're already used to your master. There's no way to make them see the matter any differently. If you come back home, you can be absolutely certain that father will punish you and take you to Dives himself this evening. The tailor, who doesn't live anywhere, will, according to what he said, spend a couple of days there. Mother can't help you; she'll do nothing but cry. If you take my advice, you'll go find Uncle Laquille, who lives at Trouville. You can ask him to get you a berth as cabin-boy in the navy. You'll be satisfied then, for it's your own idea."

"But no one would have me for a sailor," said Clopinet in a dejected tone. "Papa said so; a lame person can't do a man's work, and can only be a tailor."

"You're not so lame as all that, if without shoes you've

run about this ugly place they call the wilderness all night. Are you any the worse for it?"

"No, indeed," said Clopinet, "I'm just a little more tired in my right leg than in my left."

"That's nothing; you don't need to pay any attention to that. Now, what do you want to do? If father were here, he'd order me to take you back to the tailor, willing or unwilling. I wouldn't do it with pleasure at all, for I know what awaits you with him. Father's not here, and, if you want me to, I'll take you to Trouville. It isn't far from here, and I'd be back home this evening."

"Let's go to Trouville," cried Clopinet. "Oh, François, you're saving my life. Since mother isn't sick from grief, and father isn't concerned at all, all I ask is to sail the sea. It wishes me well and hasn't been unkind to me."

They arrived at Trouville after three hours. It was at this time a poor hamlet of fisher-folk, where Uncle Laquille, settled on the beach, had a little house, a bark, a wife and seven children. He received Clopinet very kindly, approved of his not wanting to descend to the ignoble calling of a tailor, listened with admiration to his account of the night spent on the Great-Cow, and swore by all the oaths of sea and land that he was destined for the fairest adventures. He promised to busy himself on the morrow with Clopinet's admission either into the merchant marine, or in that of the State.

"You may," he added, addressing himself to François, "return to your parents. As I know Father Doucy is dull of understanding, you'll do well to let him think the child is with his master. I know him, that crab of a tailor. He's an ill-natured rogue, stingy, cruel to the weak, chicken-hearted with the strong. I confess I would be humiliated to have a

nephew trained so filthily. Be off with you, François, and set your mind at ease. I'm taking charge of everything. There's a boy who'll be an honor to his family! Let them think he's at Dives. Perhaps two or three months will go by before Pull-to-the-left goes back to your house. When your father finds out the child has taken himself off, it'll be time to tell him that he's at sea and only taking blows from noble hands,—from the hands of real men, from sailors' hands! The greatest disgrace is to be thrashed by a hunchback."

François thought all this quite right and so did Clopinet. The idea of being punished without being at fault did not enter into his expectations. The tailor alone was capable of cruelty. François then returned home and did as it was agreed. On leaving, he handed over to his little brother a bundle of clothes that Mother Doucette had carefully mended, new shoes and a little money. To this he added from his own pocket two great fine crowns of six livres each, and a little sack of farthings, so that Clopinet would only have to break his silver on great occasions. He kissed him on both cheeks and bade him behave himself well.

Uncle Laquille was an excellent man, quite enthusiastic by nature, a little hare-brained even, mild as one who has suffered and toiled much and with patience. He had traveled and knew a good deal about things, but he remembered them as supremely beautiful, big, ugly or strange. When he had drunk a good deal of cider, it was impossible for him to tell things as they really were. Clopinet listened to him eagerly and asked him a thousand questions. At supper-time Madame Laquille returned and Clopinet was presented to her. She was a tall, lean woman, dressed in a dirty old under-petticoat and wearing a cotton

cap on her head after the fashion of the region. She had more beard on her chin than did her husband and did not seem at all used to obeying him. She didn't receive Clopinet very kindly and Laquille was obliged to tell her quickly that Clopinet's presence at their house wasn't for long. She served the guest at supper with a sour look, remarking crossly that he had the appetite of a sea-hog.

The next day, Laquille did as he had promised. He took Clopinet to several masters of barks, who, on seeing him limp, refused him. It was the same story when he presented him to the men charged with recruiting for the royal navy. Poor Clopinet returned quite humbled to his uncle's dwelling, and Laquille was forced to admit to his wife that they had had no success, because the child had a weak leg, and because, not having been raised on the seashore, he also lacked the fearless air and the active build which a sailor must have.

"I was quite sure of it," replied Madame Laquille. "He's good for nothing, even to be a lout of a peasant. You made a great mistake to take charge of him. You do nothing but foolish tricks when I'm not here. He must be taken back to the tailor or to his parents. I've enough children as it is and can't be bothered with another worthless person in the house."

"Patience, wife!" answered Laquille. "It's possible that someone may want him to go cod-fishing."

Madame Laquille shrugged her shoulders. The village overflowed with children already trained for fishing, and no one wanted this one who knew nothing and interested no one. Laquille persisted in trying the next day, but he failed. Everyone had more children than work to give them. Madame Laquille exclaimed that, for her part, she

had too many of them and didn't intend to feed one more. Laquille asked her to have patience for several days longer, and took Clopinet to the fishing. This was a great pleasure for the child, who forgot all his troubles on at last feeling himself tossed about on that great body of water he loved so much. "It's a stout lad for all that," said Laquille on their return. "He's not afraid of anything, he's not seasick, and he even has his sea-legs. If I could keep him, I'd make something of him."

Madame Laquille said nothing, but, when night was come and all the children were in bed, Clopinet, who was not asleep, for anxiety kept him awake, heard the wife in her cotton cap say to her husband: "That's enough! The tailor must pass this way tomorrow morning going to fetch some goods from Honfleur. I intend that you give over his apprentice to him; he'll be able to bring him to reason. For making children well-behaved there's nothing like whipping them down to the blood."

Laquille hung his head, sighed and made no answer. Clopinet saw that his fate was sealed, and that, no more than his mother, would his uncle save him from the tailor. Then, determined to save himself, he waited until everyone was asleep and got up very quietly. He put on his clothes, took his bundle which was serving him for a pillow. Making sure that his money was in his pocket, he prepared to leave his bed. It was a strange sort of bed, I assure you. As the whole Laquille family were lying very much crowded in the only two bedsteads in the house, a bundle of seaweed had been put down for Clopinet in a little loft lighted by a garret-window. There one must climb by means of a ladder, and Clopinet stretched out a foot in the darkness to find the bar of that ladder. He felt nothing, and



LAQUILLE TOOK CLOPINET TO THE FISHING

remembered that Madame Laquille had taken it away to climb to her granary, which was opposite at the other end of the room. Clopinet lifted a little rag which served as curtain for his garret-window and saw that the night was clear. Thus he was able to satisfy himself that the ladder was out of reach and it was not possible to jump from such a height without breaking his neck.

It was strange that he did not think at all of his wings. His brother had laughed at him on this subject, and he dared not speak of it again to any one. He told himself that he had perhaps dreamed it. However, he must get away and not wait for the daytime. He opened the window and made sure his body could pass through. But on sticking his head out, he saw that it was much too high to jump down. The sea was still a long way back from the house. He had noticed, the evening before, that the tide came to beat on the posts which supported the house. But when would it be back? He'd been told, once every twenty-three hours, but Clopinet couldn't count well enough to figure it out.

"If the sea comes to look for me," he said to himself, "I'll surely jump into it; I'm not afraid, for it's good to me."

He mused thus for a long time, always grasping his bundle. Sometimes he slept in spite of himself, and dreamed he was on his uncle's bark. Suddenly a puff of wind opened the garret window he had insecurely fastened. He woke up with a start and heard without the childlike voices of the little spirits of the night. This time he understood their song. "Come, come," they said, "to the sea, to the sea! Come, don't go to sleep again. Open your wings and come with us. To the sea, to the sea!"

Clopinet felt his heart throb and his wings open up. He sprang to the window, and from there onto an old mast attached to the house which served as a roost for the pigeons. Then he slid, or took wing as he thought, and found himself on the water in his uncle's bark.

It was well moored with a chain and a clasp. He had no means of making use of it, but the water only licked the shore and was not deep. Clopinet, whether he swam after the fashion of the birds or whether he was carried along by the wind, arrived without wetting his body in a great plain of sand and of very sharp sea-rushes where it wasn't at all easy to walk fast. Moreover, it was the time for sleeping, and Clopinet had stayed awake beyond his strength. He lay down in this fine and warm sand and didn't wake up until sunrise, well rested and quite content to find himself free. His joy was quickly dulled by a troublesome discovery. He had thought he flew and walked in the direction of Honfleur, whose lighthouse he had seen, but he had been mistaken. He knew now where he was. He had passed this way two days before with his brother François. The tailor must return from Dives along this route and Clopinet ran the risk of meeting him. The idea of returning to Trouville wasn't any more reassuring. He would be seen there; they would not fail to point out his tracks to the enemy.

He made up his mind to proceed along the dunes close to the sea, keeping away from the upper path. His uncle had told him that the tailor had an aversion to the ocean; he was terribly afraid of it. He said he had never been able to set foot on a bark without being deathly sick. Just the sight of the waves sufficed to turn his stomach, and when he traveled along the seacoast, he took good care not to

follow the strand. He always went by the upper and more distant path.

Clopinet arrived thus at Villers, where, after having looked carefully about him, he quickly bought a big loaf of bread. Forthwith he was on his way along the dunes to the Black-Cows. Here he found himself alone, in his wilderness, with the same pleasure as if he was seeing again his house and his garden.

He did not wish to return home. What his brother had told him had taken away all hope of softening his father and of obtaining protection from Mother Doucette. He ate his bread, his eyes on the shore. The few days he had spent with his uncle had given him some notion of the lay of the land. The day was clear; he saw how far off the mouth of the Seine was, and that to reach Honfleur it was necessary to cross flat and open country. The dunes where he was hiding were the only ones in the vicinity. The poor child was afraid of everyone; Madame Laquille had not reconciled him with human-kind. Besides, he was quite used to solitude, Clopinet who had done nothing else but tend cows in a part of the country where no one ever passed. Finally, since he had had dealings with the spirits, he had no more fear of wild life.

Having considered all these things he determined to explore the back of the dune and settle down there for always—for always! You are going to tell me that this wasn't possible, that winter would come, that Clopinet's two or three crowns would quickly be spent. Besides, if he'd had a good deal of money, how would he manage to eat and clothe himself in a desert where only plants grew, where even the flocks wouldn't feed? There was of course the sea and its inexhaustible shellfish, but one tired of them,

especially when the drinking water wasn't very good. I'll say to you in reply that Clopinet wasn't a child like those who at twelve years know how to read and write. He knew nothing at all, he foresaw nothing, he had never reflected; perhaps he did not even have the habit of thinking. His mother had always done his thinking for him. In spite of himself he imagined she was always there, two steps away, ready to bring him his dinner and to tuck him into his bed. It was only once in a while that he remembered he was alone for always. By dint of repeating this phrase to himself, it came to him that he wasn't understanding anything and that the future only meant one thing for him: to escape from the tailor.

He buried himself in the rifts of the dune. Around the Black-Cows, it was more than a hundred meters high and shaped up like the peak of a mountain, very beautiful, very somber. Its sides were streaked with red, gray and brownish green, which gave it the look of solid rock. It was here that he would have preferred to hide himself, but it did not seem possible. It occurred to him that there might be some passage into the dune. His brother had impressed on him so strongly that he must not sleep on the Black-Cows he was resolved not to risk it any more. Since day-break he became a little fearful again, and did not put much faith in what he had seen the night before. He climbed the nearer parts of the dune and found them less frightful and less difficult than he had believed. Soon he knew all the solid spots and how they could be crossed without danger of landslides, by following the parts where certain plants grew. He also knew the ones which were tricky. Finally he got into the great sand-hill and saw that certain gaps in it were covered with turf. He could walk there without slip-

ping too much, and without sinking in. After having wandered about for a long time, along landslides which were more or less solid, he came to a rocky section and saw before him a cave, partly walled up. He entered and found that some one had hollowed it out like a little house to live in. There was a stone bench and a blackened spot as if a fire had been kindled. It had been a long time since anyone had lived there, for the beautiful fine grass which grew about the entrance bore no trace of having been trampled down. There were great bushes hanging down before the opening, which no one troubled any more to cut back.

Clopinet took possession of this hermitage abandoned for many years because of the slipping down of the ground roundabout. He put his bundle within and cut dry grass to make himself a bed on the stone bench. "Now," he said, "neither the tailor nor my Aunt Laquille shall ever find me. I'm quite comfortable here. If I just had one of our cows to keep me company, I wouldn't have at all a bad time of it."

He missed his cows, for all that he had never been very fond of them, and he began to feel sad. He decided to go to sleep, for he had enough bread for two days, and had made up his mind not to show himself as long as the tailor might be in the vicinity. He slept a long time, and, when night was come, was tired of sleeping. Emboldened by the darkness, he surveyed what he liked to call his garden, for there was an abundance of flowers there. It was all the same a queer sort of garden; it was like a moat between quite steep banks which only permitted a patch of sky to be seen. There was an opening, but this was very high up on the dune, and there was no path for going up and down. Clo-

pinet, not remembering very well how he had got there, asked himself if he could find the way out.

As he was quite easy in his mind and suffered no longer from hunger, he tried for the first time to reason and to look ahead. Only necessity could have driven him to it. He told himself that as someone had lived there, it must still be possible to find one's way in and out. He also told himself that he must be close to the sea, since he thought he was the distance of the thickness of the dune from the little path which ran pretty near the middle of it, this same path by which he had escaped from the tailor. But why didn't he see the ocean? The ravine where he was bent a little to the right, but to the left it was formed like a regular path. He followed it and soon came to a low wall, evidently built by the hand of man, with a gap in it through which he looked. Then he saw the ocean a hundred feet below, and the moon which rose amid great dark clouds. He was glad to be able to look whenever he chose at this sea which he loved so much. He heard its voice rising and it promised to lull him to sleep more gently than around the Great-Cow. He took a good look at the outer wall of the cliff, for at this point the dune was solid enough to form a real cliff, quite steep and entirely inaccessible. The person who had lived there before Clopinet had surely had reasons for hiding himself well, or he would not have made a look-out in a spot so steep and wild.

Next, Clopinet wanted to see the other end of this winding ravine where he was as if shut in. Retracing his steps, he walked in that direction, but he was soon halted by a deep crevice and a very steep natural wall. Finally he hunted by the light of the moon, not very bright, to find the place where he had entered this hiding-place. He busied

himself groping in many crevices closed by such dangerous landslides that he dared not explore any farther, and he resolved to inspect them in the daytime. The moon became more and more overcast, but the patch of sky he saw over his head was still clear. He took advantage of it to return to his cave, for his wild garden wasn't very level or easy to walk over. He wasn't sleepy; he was bored at seeing nothing, and grew sad. He hoped that the little spirits would come to keep him company, but he heard nothing save the roaring of the storm which grew louder and drowned out that of the sea. Then he fell asleep, but his sleep was light and frequently broken into.

He had never dreamed, so soundly was he accustomed to sleep. Or, if he had dreamed, he had never remembered about it when he woke up. Tonight, he dreamed a good deal. He thought he was lost again in the dunes without being able to find his way out. Then he found himself all at once transported to his native place, to his home. He heard his father counting money and repeating unceasingly the same number, *eighteen, eighteen, eighteen*—it was eighteen francs which had been promised to the tailor for his first year of apprenticeship, and the tailor wanted twenty. Father Doucy would not give in, and he had kept saying "eighteen" until his offer was accepted.—Clopinot thought then he felt the terrible crooked hand of the tailor pounce upon him. He gave a great cry and woke up.—Where was he? It was as dark as an oven in the cave. He finally remembered where he was and set his mind at rest. But all at once he did not know what to think, for he heard quite distinctly, and this time he was quite wide awake, a voice talking not two steps from him. It kept saying *eighteen, eighteen, eighteen*.

Clopinet broke out in a cold sweat all over his body. This wasn't his father's strong, full voice. It was a shrill and broken voice, quite like the tailor's when he had said: "eighteen, eighteen, . . . I'll take eighteen!"—So he was here! He had discovered the hiding-place of his apprentice; he was going to take him away? Clopinet, desperate, leaped from his bed of stone. Something whirled noisily around him and left the cave repeating in a shrill voice which lost itself in the distance: "eighteen, . . . eighteen! . . ."

The tailor had then come here, perhaps to take refuge from the storm. He had not seen Clopinet asleep, but when he woke up must have been afraid of him, since he ran away. The thought that the tailor was a coward, perhaps more cowardly than he himself, encouraged Clopinet very much. He lay down again, his staff by his side, resolved to strike hard if the enemy came back.

When he had dozed a short while, he woke up again. The storm had passed, the moon shone on the grass at the mouth of the cave. It had rained, and the foliage which hung before the opening shone like green diamonds. Then Clopinet was greatly astonished to hear, in the stillness of the night, the bellowing of a bull, the bleating of goats and the barking of dogs quite close by. He listened, and the sound was repeated so often that by closing his eyes he could have sworn he was in his own house listening to his animals. However, he was really in his cave in the wilderness. How could a dwelling and flocks be so close to him?

At first the sounds were pleasing to him; they calmed his fear of solitude. But the *eighteen* still rang in his ears, repeated time and again by many voices which came from different directions. It was as if a troop of tailors were scattered on the high points of the sand-hill mocking and

threatening him. Clopinet could not go to sleep again; he awaited daylight without stirring and heard nothing more. He left the cave, looked everywhere but saw no one. He only saw passing over his head sea- and shore-birds which had roosted on the top of the dunes. He saw lapwings, with emerald plumage, which fluttered, cutting a thousand graceful capers, different species of snipes, and a great bittern which passed sadly, his neck folded back and his feet spread out. Clopinet did not know these birds by name. He had never seen them close by, because there was neither pond nor river near his home, and birds of passage did not light there. He delighted in looking at these creatures, but their presence did not explain to him the sounds which had startled him. He resolved to find out if any people lived in his neighborhood.

He felt that he must, first of all, learn to get out of his hollow. In broad daylight, nothing was easier, although the passage was narrow and entangled with thorny bushes. He noted it carefully, and, sure of not becoming confused again, even at night, he climbed to a more elevated point from which he could survey all the near-by country. As far as he could see, there was nothing but wasteland, without the least trace of cultivation or of a dwelling.

He then thought the goblins of the night had wanted to frighten him. His brother François had told him: "There are no spirits on the sea; on land I'm not so sure!" and his parents believed in all sorts of hobgoblins, good or bad, which gave sickness or health to their beasts. Clopinet didn't pride himself on knowing more about it than his parents. He'd never had anything to do with spirits, before passing the night out of doors. But since that experience he believed in the spirits of the sea. He could then easily believe in

those of the land, and this made him uneasy, for he had reason to think they were against him. Perhaps they wished to keep him from living in the cliff; perhaps the tailor himself was a sorcerer and had the power to come in the spirit to annoy him during the night. All that was very much confused in Clopinet's head. But, after all, the phantom which said *eighteen* had fled before him, and the others hadn't dared to show themselves. They had contented themselves with imitating the cries of animals, perhaps to make him come out of his shelter and lose himself in the night. "Another time," he thought, "they can say whatever they please. I'll not budge at all. I'll not get lost any more in the sand-hill. I know it now, and if the goblins come into my cave, I'll beat them. My uncle told me my wings of courage would grow."

IV

CLOPINET began to hunt drinking-water. There was no lack of water; it gushed forth on all sides. He noted that the higher he climbed, the fresher was the water. However, it had an earthy taste which wasn't at all pleasant. Finally he discovered a little streamlet which came from the rocky part of the dune and which the wild thyme scented. This good water fell a drop at a time, as if it wanted to be urged, and he lacked a pitcher to catch it in. He saw in several places great oyster-shells held fast in the clay. They were almost all broken, for the sea had formerly come up that far, and had tossed them about. On looking more carefully, he found many huge ones quite whole. He fitted them together very neatly, one over the other, in the course of the little stream, so that they could all be filled and supply him with

water, always ready and always renewed. He waited a while and then carried one quite full for breakfast in his garden. He had only dry bread, but he wasn't used to dainties and knew very well how to get along without them.

He did not find the day long. The weather was delightful, and he amused himself looking at the plants growing on his lawn, which were not like those of the plain. There were unpleasant ones, all bristling with thorns and with stings, but he excused them for it. They were like doorkeepers charged with defending him from troublesome visits. There were other very pretty ones which delighted him greatly. He took pains not to walk or sit on them, for they brightened up the surroundings of his shelter, and he would have reproached himself for crushing them.

This day, through the hole which he called his window, in the old section of the wall on the side of the cliff, he took his fill of looking at the sea. He thought it more beautiful than he had yet seen it. Far away he saw small boats of different sizes; none of them approached the Black-Cows, for the place was held to be dangerous. Today people go there from all directions to gather mussels, but then the shore was deserted. There was not a soul to be seen. This great solitude made him bold. Towards evening he went down to the beach to pick up shell-fish for his supper. He looked carefully to see whether his window could be seen from without. This was impossible, he found; it was too high, too little, and the wall was too well hidden by the bushes. That night he slept very peacefully. He had walked and climbed about so much to explore all the inner parts of the solitary place that he didn't need to be rocked to sleep. If the goblins amused themselves crying out and talking, as they had the night before, he didn't hear them,

The third day was spent exploring the lower part of the dune, so that he would have a good hiding-place there in case of being surprised on the beach. He found ten hiding-places instead of just one. After attending to this, he felt himself as free as a little wild animal which is familiar with its hunting-ground and its hole. He also laid in his supply of shellfish so that he would have the wherewithal for luncheon or dinner in his cave, if he didn't choose to go down to the sea before each meal. There were many rushes on the beach, gorse, dwarfed willows, supple shrubs. He broke off branches and worked at home (he already said *at home*) to make himself a fine, big, reasonably strong basket. He also made himself an excellent bed with the seaweed the sea threw up on the beach. At last it was his fancy to go hunting. As he was skillful in flinging stones, he lay in wait and brought down a sea-partridge which he saw running about on the strand. It was a fine fat bird; now he must cook it. Clopinet had no difficulty in lighting a fire. He had in his bundle what in those days was called a *tinder-box*, and with which everyone was supplied when traveling. It was an iron ring and a piece of German-tinder. With a pebble, one got fire almost as quickly as now. He gathered up a pile of leaves and of dry brushwood, and succeeded in cooking his bird. I'll not answer for the meat being very good and not smelling of smoke, but he found it excellent. He was sorry not to be able to offer a wing to his mother and a leg to his brother, François. The sea-partridge isn't a partridge at all, but rather a swallow. It lives on shellfish and not on grain. It's very pretty; its beak and the ring about its neck are in effect a little like those of the partridge. It's about as large as a blackbird; so you see Clopinet didn't have to be careful not to overeat.

He had seen, while hunting this bird, many others which tempted him sorely, sandpipers, plovers, sea-larks, which are not really larks but a sort of small woodcock—oyster-catchers or magpies of the sea, fish-eating ducks, sea gulls, loons. Finally, there were many plumed creatures he did not recognize, which at the coming of night circled about on the sand with noisy cries. He noted very large ones swimming far out, which with the setting of the sun withdrew still farther, as if they were accustomed to sleep on the sea. Some returned to the land and stole into crevices in the dune; others took flight, soared very high and seemed to vanish out of sight in the morning amid the little white clouds which floated like sea-foam in the rosy sky. In the evening, these birds came down again to sup on the rocks and in the sand. Clopinet imagined at first they spent the day in the sky, but he saw one large one perched on the very top of the dune. It later came down to take a turn in the air and to visit its fishing-place. Another bird did the same thing, and then another. Clopinet counted twenty of them. He concluded from this that these birds nested high on the dune, and that they were night-birds like screech owls.

Clopinet made many observations from the window in the wall. He looked at the birds close by without being seen by them, and found out something which interested him very much. The sea-swallows, which described great circles about him, often let fall from their beaks something which was like shellfish or minnows. As they poised themselves above, uttering a certain cry, they had the air of doing it on purpose and of doing it to give notice. He followed with his eye one in particular and then looked down below. He saw something stir on the ground, as if it were the little ones which came to pick up the food their mothers threw

down to them from the air above. When he returned to the strand, he was able to satisfy himself that he was not mistaken. When he tried to come near the little ones to take them in his hands, for they were not able to fly yet, the mother swallow gave another cry. This, instead of calling them out onto the sand, made them run away into the grass. Clopinet looked for them where they lay hid, holding themselves quite still. He found them, but didn't wish to catch them for fear of grieving their mother, who probably knew how many there were.

By watching how the birds set about fishing, Clopinet learned to fish. Usually there were only shellfish on the beach, but just as the tide receded one could find many very pretty and very tasty little fish. It was only a question of being there to lay hold of them before the billow which pushed them forward had swept them away. He saw how skillful the bird-fishermen were, and imitated them. But the tide was strong, and Clopinet, without being afraid of it, saw clearly now that he lacked the wings to skip over the surge. His desire to fly no more sufficed to turn him into a bird. He only had that power in moments of great danger or distress, and he was not too anxious to be in such a situation again. He preferred to learn to swim himself. As he trusted the sea, in a day he swam like a gull without himself knowing how it came about. It's undoubtedly true that man swims naturally like all the animals, and it's only fear which hinders him.

However, as the birds could swim longer than he without becoming tired and could see better through the seawater, he was far from catching as many fish as they did. He gave up then competing with these finished divers. He noticed other birds which did not dive, but with their long

beaks searched the sand while it was still wet. He also dug with a little shovel which he made for himself, and found as many sand-eels as he could use. The sand-eel is an excellent little eel which is plentiful on that seacoast. He cooked some for his supper, and if he had had some bread, he would have thought he was faring like a king. But his was all gone, and he dared not show himself yet, to go buy some more at Villers.

He made up his mind to go without bread as long as he could, and took it into his head to find some eggs. It was nesting-time. He didn't know that most sea-birds don't make nests, that they lay on the bare ground, or almost so, on the sand or in the rocks. He found some eggs there by chance when he wasn't looking for them, but they were so tiny that they did not amount to much. The large birds whose eggs were of good size probably laid on the top of the cliff, and it didn't seem possible for a person to go that high. On the side of the wastelands it was much less steep than on that of the sea. But it was steep enough for dizziness to seize one if he so much as glanced down.

Each day which passed made Clopinet less cowardly. He learned to be prudent, that is to say, calmly brave, and to apply his reason to the danger in place of fleeing from it blindly. He studied so carefully the outlines and the hollows of the great cliff, that he mounted almost to the top without mishap. He was well repaid for his trouble, for he found in a hole four pretty eggs which he put into his basket, the bottom of which he had lined with seaweed. He also found beautiful feathers there, and picked up three which he stuck on his cap. They were long feathers, slender and delicate, white as snow, which seemed to come from the head or from the tail of the same bird. As the eggs

were quite warm, he was sure that the mothers came at night to lay or to set, and that he could surprise and capture them. However, it also occurred to him that, for a bird or two taken, he would frighten all the others and risk causing them to give up the nesting-place. He preferred to find eggs there at will, when it pleased him to come back, and he made up his mind to leave the birds alone.

Eight days had already passed, and Clopinet had not seen anyone on the shore or on the dunes. He had been so busy he hadn't had time to be bored. Now when he was nicely settled and practically certain of his living, when the sand-hills and the shore did not have a single nook which he had not explored, he came to find the day long and not to know very well what to do with his leisure. Already he knew the habits of pretty nearly all the wild creatures in the midst of which he lived. He would have liked to know their names, from what place they came, to tell someone what he had seen. The weather was very fine. The mud below the dune dried in the May sun and the strand became again a possible path at the hours of low tide. He then saw several passers-by, and his heart beat very hard with the desire to go speak to them, if it were only to say: "It's fine weather. What a pleasure to walk on a day like this!" He dared not, for, if he were asked who he was and what he was doing there, what would he answer? He knew that vagabonds were everywhere gathered up and put into prison. He was too simple-minded and too honest to give himself an assumed name and to invent a false story, preferring not to show himself.

However, one morning the wind brought to him a sound of church-bells, so that he knew it was Sunday. He put on his best clothes, and then he fastened the three white feathers

to his cap. He put on his shoes very neatly, and, well-combed and well-washed, he set out walking without knowing very well where he was bound. He was accustomed to go to church on Sundays. It was the day for the young boys of his parish to meet and talk together. That bell which was sounding was a call to normal living. Clopinet was incapable of understanding that one could remain alone on Sunday.

Might he not meet again his brother François? He would have risked a good deal to have word of his father and mother; so he ventured forth, thinking that the tailor must be quite distant in the direction of Honfleur. He cut across the wastelands as the crow flies, and soon found himself not far above Villers. As he knew no one there and no one knew him, he hoped to pass by unnoticed, to see Christian faces and to hear the sound of the human voice, without anyone paying attention to him. This had already happened to him in this place, since he had gone through it twice. This time, however, he was very much astonished to see that everyone was looking at him, and even turning around to follow him with their eyes.

V

THIS disturbed Clopinet, and he thought of turning back. But, as he was passing before a baker shop, the longing to eat bread was so strong that he stopped at the door to ask for some.

"How much do you want, my boy?" the baker asked looking at Clopinet with an air of lively surprise.

"Can you give me a very big one?" said Clopinet, who wanted to have enough for several days.

"Certainly," answered the baker, "and even two, and even three, if you're stout enough to carry them."

"All right, give me three of them," replied Clopinet, "I'll be able to carry them easily."

"Then there's a big family to feed at your house?"

"So it would seem," answered the child, who did not wish to fib.

"Oh, oh, you're quite proud! You don't like to talk? You don't want to say who you are or where you live. I don't know you, and you aren't of this part of the country."

"No, I'm not from here at all," answered Clopinet, "but I haven't time to talk. Give me my three loaves, if you please, and tell me how much I owe you."

"Oh, well, that calls for considerable money, for bread is very dear here. But if you want to give me the three feathers you have in your cap, you may come back every Sunday for a month to get as much bread as you have today. I won't ask you to pay for it at all. You see I'm fair, and you ought to be satisfied."

Clopinet thought at first that the baker was making fun of him. When the man persisted, all at once enough wisdom came to him to see that his three feathers must be something rare. People were looking at them and not at him. He took them off quickly. The baker was already reaching out his hand to take them when Clopinet, who was not anxious for money, because with his two big crowns he thought himself rich for all his life, refused to give up these wonderfully beautiful feathers he had sought so high up, in peril of his life. "No," he said, "here's money. Take what I owe you for the three loaves. I'd rather keep my three feathers."

"Do you want bread twice a week instead of once?"

"No, thank you; I'd rather pay."

"Do you want four loaves a week for two months?"

"I tell you, no," answered Clopinet, "I prefer my feathers."

The baker gave him the three loaves; Clopinet paid and went away. To take again the road to the wilderness he must turn the corner, and he found himself behind the baker's house. He heard this man say: "No, for forty-eight pounds of bread, he wasn't willing to part with his feathers!"

Clopinet stopped under the window and heard a woman's voice which asked: "Were they surely the feathers of the egret?"

"Oh, real ones, and the most beautiful I've ever seen!"

"The deuce," cried the woman, "they're getting scarce! The egrets don't nest any more on the strand, and now some of these feathers are selling for a louis apiece. That would have made you three louis! You must run after this child and offer him a crown for each feather. Perhaps he'll feel differently about cash than a credit in bread."

Clopinet, as we have seen, cared nothing about cash. He went faster, and while the baker was looking for him in one direction, he escaped in the other and went back again to his wilderness.

This adventure gave him a good deal to think about. "Why, then," he said to himself, "since there are egrets, are their feathers so valuable? How is it possible that birds' feathers can be worth a gold louis apiece? I should have thought they could only serve as playthings to wear on the head. And yet, if I'd asked the baker to feed me for a year, he'd perhaps have said yes, to get my three feathers!"

Not having yet known want, Clopinet was not interested

in the money. He was very much more alive to the pleasure of owning a rare thing which had perhaps, unknown to him, a marvelous power. Absorbed in these thoughts, he followed, without being on his guard any more, the path in the midst of the dunes. All at once he heard behind him a harsh and loud voice saying: "So he's taken off in this direction. Don't worry; I'll catch him all right. If he doesn't want to sell his feathers, I'll take them away from him. That way we'll have them for nothing, and it's the best way to do business."

The voice was still in the distance, but it was so piercing it carried a long way. It was one of those voices one never forgets, and Clopinet knew that the tailor in person was hot on his heels. Quick as a flash the wings of fear bore him out of the path into the bushes. When he was there, he felt very much ashamed to be so cowardly before a hunchback—Clopinet, who had climbed on the great sand-hill and who had swum in the sea, two things which Pull-to-the-left had never dared to attempt. "I must," he thought, "be a man and cease fearing another man; otherwise, I'll always be miserable and not be able to go where I choose. I'm as big and as strong as this half-baked tailor, and my Uncle Laquille asserts that he is only brave with those who aren't. Let's put an end to it. Very well, then! and may the kind sea-spirits protect me!"

He proudly put back his three feathers on his cap, and laid his three loaves on the grass. Picking up his staff, which was a stout one with an iron tip, he set out straightway to meet the tailor, resolved to stop him and to cure him of running after him. When he looked the tailor in the face Clopinet's heart failed him and he all but fled again. But forthwith he waved his arms telling himself that they were

his wings of courage. He twirled his staff fast and with fine effect. The tailor stopped short, and, drawing back a couple of steps: "Hello!" he said sniggering and pretending to be polite, "it's my little apprentice! Stop, Clopinet, my dear, see who it is. I'm your friend, and don't wish you any harm."

"Yes, but you do," answered Clopinet, "you want to steal my three feathers. I know it."

"What," cried the tailor astonished, "who's told you such a thing?"

"The spirits, of course," said Clopinet holding his position on a big stone by the side of the path, still prepared to defend his treasure and his liberty. As soon as he had spoken these words, he saw Pull-to-the-left turn pale and tremble, for the tailor feared spirits more than man: "Come, come, young one," he began again, "you're very ill-natured! Tell me where the egrets nest which give you such feathers. I'll not ask you another thing."

"They nest," answered Clopinet, "in a place where only birds and spirits can mount. I tell you I'm not afraid of you. If you try anything else with me, I'll carry you up there like an egret with a crab, and I'll toss you down into the bottom of the sea."

Clopinet spoke thus, as if drunk with anger and boldness. The tailor thought surely the boy was possessed by demons, and retreated muttering I don't know what words. He retraced his steps to Villers at top speed, while Clopinet, astonished at his victory, picked up his loaves, and carried them briskly into his cave.

There, he spoke out loud to himself, for he absolutely had to say something: "That's settled; I'll never again be afraid of anything. No one shall ever take me where I don't

want to go. I'm free and if it's the spirit of the sea which has given me courage, I don't want ever to lose what it's given me. Now," he said, still talking to himself, "I'll look for more feathers of this wonderful bird whose feathers, I don't know why, are so tempting to people. When I've a lot of them, I'll sell them, and I'll go say to my father: 'I don't need to be a tailor. All crippled as I am, I'm able to earn more money in a day than my brothers in a year.' So, my father will be satisfied and let me live as I choose."

He was overjoyed now to find himself in his solitude again. He was so glad to have some bread, and that he had bought was so good, he didn't eat another thing all day. The fear of not having enough food or of being too much occupied with fishing for each meal had disturbed a little the preceding days. Sure from now on of going about fearlessly and of buying what he chose, he did not any longer limit his ambition to catching little birds and fish for his meals. He wished to have splendid things, feathers to make all the residents of the countryside jealous and to cause the niggardly tailor to die of rage.

The next day, he did a dangerous and difficult thing. Before daylight he climbed up into the very midst of the great jagged peaks of the cliff. He mounted so skillfully and so swiftly that he didn't wake up a single bird. Then he lay down quietly at one side, so that he could see well without having to make any movement. He had not gone that far the first time. He was surprised to find a ruin there which could not be seen without coming close to it, and he was able now to figure out its original purpose. The place was very well fitted to serve as a refuge for birds, who love to perch. A lookout had been built here in former

times. You've seen one of them in another part of these same dunes. It had served for observing all that went on at sea and for passing on the news. Formerly it was a simple observation hut to prevent the theft of salt, which was very commonly smuggled in.

The hut in question had fallen down, with a section of the great cliff. Its loosened planks and its frame-work had remained partly standing, held in a crevice. The egrets, who love trees, but who had been very much hunted in the woods and the ponds of the region on account of their valuable plumage, had established their colony on this ruin, invisible from without and for a long time forgotten. A little marsh had formed at some distance from the landslide, and many other water-birds had moved their abode to this spot.

This lookout explained the hermitage and the peep-hole for observation, located below and likewise abandoned. Without doubt, it was a shelter which the signal-men, forced to live in this exposed place, had hollowed out and built in secret so as to protect themselves better from the storms, without being found fault with by their chiefs.

Clopinet, who had brought back from his short stay at Trouville ideas a little more clear than before, was happy to see that he was alone in his possession of the secret of his abode and that of the egrets. He observed their nests, roughly built of boughs and placed at the joining of the timbers of the frame-work. He saw only the females who brooded without troubling themselves about him. But gradually the males arrived to rest from their nightly hunt. It is because of their habits and also because of their cries that, of old, naturalists called them night-crows. They belong to the same family as the herons; their real name is night-

heron. Their plumage is thick, and their flight is noiseless, like that of all night-birds. However, when they have young ones, they also hunt during the day. None had hatched as yet in the colony, and the gentlemen came here to sleep after having fed the ladies. Clopinet had seen them first from below, and believed them entirely white. He now discovered that only their necks and their breasts were white. Their wings were pearl-gray. A pretty dark green mantle covered their backs, and from their cap, also green, fell down over their backs that long and fine aigrette invariably made up of three feathers. Only the males seem to have this rich head-dress, but Clopinet saw that many males did not have it yet, or had it no longer. It was molting season and many of these precious feathers, scattered on the rocks, were the sport of the wind. Clopinet, however, did not stir to gather them, wishing to observe the habits of these rovers of the night. Without paying any attention to him, the males brought to the brooding females the fish, shellfish, and insects they had caught. The meal finished, they became aware of the presence of a stranger, and all at the same time, warned by the cry of one of them, turned their heads in his direction.

At first Clopinet was a little upset to see all these great red eyes regarding him. There were fully fifty of the males there, as big as young turkeys, armed with long beaks and with sharp claws. If all had set on the curious child, they would have been able to harm him. They looked at him with a stupid air, and, not seeing him move, took to quarreling among themselves, with blows of their wings which didn't hurt each other. They then began to scratch themselves, to stretch; even to yawn like tired people. Finally,

each sought out a comfortable spot, and all fell asleep standing on one foot until sunrise. Then Clopinet rose quietly and got in his harvest of feathers without disturbing the birds. After this he descended, wisely determined not to give them a dislike for their encampment and not to take the eggs from the females.

He returned the following night before the males were back from their night-hunt. He did not wake up the brooding females, but put bread before their nests, thinking they would find it good and be grateful to him for it. He was not mistaken, although it was a childish idea. Almost all birds love bread, however different their natural food may be. In the morning he saw that his had been eaten. He went on doing this, and soon all the egrets, males and females, were used to seeing him, did not run away very far, and finally did not run away at all. Young ones were hatched who, knowing him before they knew the fear of man, were so well tamed that they came to him, settled down on his knees, ate from his hand, and followed him as far as the edge of the sand-hill when he left them.

He enjoyed this employment so much that he was not bored at all. He commenced to love these wild birds as he had never loved his pigeons and his chickens. He scorned his early commonplace friendships and felt proud to have tamed these distrustful creatures, whose refuge the country people were vainly searching without being able to come near it. He also became attached to all the other birds. He perceived that by scattering bread on all sides when he walked about, stepping sedately and noiselessly, not attacking or frightening any of them, he succeeded in not putting them to flight any more and in seeing them come to

rest, flutter and frolic quite close to him. He reproached himself with the murder of the sea-partridge, and went out to buy cheese and meat, so that he would not be tempted any more to kill the companions of his solitude.

He did not go to buy supplies at Villers, where he was afraid of being recognized, annoyed, and perhaps followed by the baker. He had noticed a hamlet nearer at hand, since it was situated on the dune itself, on the side where it sank towards the firm ground. I believe this hamlet was named Auberville. He found there all that he wished, even well-preserved apples for which he paid dear. He was not wise enough not to waste some money. He drank a pitcher of cider; he loved it so much. He took great care not to wear his feathers, and not to talk needlessly. He had from now on two secrets to guard, his name and his native place, so as not to be forcibly led back to his parents; his dwelling in the cliff, so as not to draw curious children or amateur feather-hunters. By listening, however, to the talk of others he learned many things about the region. He perceived that the young residents of this village knew quite well the habits of the birds of the seacoast. They only named two valuable species: the egrets or night-herons, that could not be caught because they hid themselves too well or did not nest any more in the region, and the small grebes, who only flew over and had been hunted so much they had become rare and fearful. Clopinet asked some questions about these grebes and learned that the thick and brilliant plumage of their breasts was sold for ornamental trimming to the feather-merchants who passed twice a year. As he already had a dozen feathers he wanted very much to know the day and the hour when these men would pass, so that he could



CLOPINET COMMENCED TO LOVE THESE WILD BIRDS

do business with them. However, he feared to ask too many questions and resolved to find out some other day.

VI

HE WONDERED that no one had yet been to look for egrets where he had found them, and in this connection he heard something which was bound to disturb him a little. Formerly, some one said, these birds were found on the trees of the great cliff. But since a big piece of it fell into the sea and there were no more trees to hold back the ground, no one went there any more. It was maintained that a person's weight would suffice to make the rest fall down. Clopinet went home somewhat disturbed, he who lived in this cliff and mounted to the summit almost every morning!

That night, he was afraid. There was a swell, and the sound of the sea came to him as if there were squalls. Each moment he was on the alert, thinking it was the cliff which was giving way. He had examined the place too well not to be sure that his hermitage was of the same nature as the big stones called the Black-Cows and the White-Cows. They had been carried down by the earth and had given way with it. The sea continued to waste away the bottom of the dunes, and each winter it was said she consumed great mouthfuls of it. These big stones which seemed to create the security of Clopinet's refuge could very well rest on a soil as frail as the top-soil which covered it. Even though they did not sink under him, those above might give way, close up the exit and bury him alive in his cave. He did not sleep at all. As he began to think of these matters, he clearly saw that if reasoning is a necessary thing it is also a sad thing and a source of a thousand fears. Happily, this child had in his

head a passion which was stronger than the fear of danger; it was to live in the midst of nature free and master of himself. He did not know the word, nature, but he knew he was in love with wild life, and proud of resisting the temptation to return to the quiet of the fields and the comforts of family life. So he remained in his bird's nest, fancying that since the birds nested over him they knew more about it than men, and had the instinct to know that the mountain was firm.

He passed the whole summer here; sometimes laying in supplies in one place, sometimes in another, not making himself known in any village. He accustomed himself more and more to live only on sea-products and wild fruits, so as not to become the slave of his stomach. He gradually became so sparing that greediness did not draw him any more in the direction of the countryside. He succeeded in finding the feather-merchants on their rounds and having an interview with them without witnesses. He had sufficient judgment not to show himself too demanding, so that he might make a connection for the future. He contented himself with a crown for each feather, and, as he had gathered fifty, three hundred livres in good louis d'or were counted out to him. This was an enormous sum for those times, and surely no little country boy of his age had ever before earned such wealth.

When he found himself the master of a fortune, he resolved to go take it to his parents. First, however, he wanted to see his Uncle Laquille again, and at the approach of winter he set out on his way to Trouville. He wished to present himself properly to his family, and his clothes, even the best ones, were very much damaged by his constant climbing and by lack of mending. He ordered at

Dives, where he had gone several times, a new suit, a little linen, and good shoes. He paid for all very liberally, and, his stick in his hand, his money in his pocket, he directed his steps toward Trouville. There he encountered his uncle all in tears returning from the church. He had just buried his wife, and although she had made him as unhappy as could be, the poor man wept for her as if she had been an angel. He was quite surprised to see Clopinet again, for he thought he had gone back to his parents. He hardly recognized the boy, so greatly had he changed. Without being aware of it, Clopinet had grown. He had the tanned complexion which sea-air gives; by dint of climbing and working, he had gained strength. His weak leg had become as good as the other, and he didn't limp any more. His face had also taken on another aspect, a quick piercing glance, a confident and grave expression. His clothes, better made than those which Pull-to-the-left turned out by the wholesale for the country-people, also gave him a better build and a better air than he had had formerly. Laquille was struck by it at once.

"Where did you come from?" he cried. "You aren't coming from home?"

"No," said Clopinet, "but tell me how they are. We'll talk about my affairs afterwards."

"I can't tell you," replied Uncle Laquille. "When you ran away from our house that night, it'll soon be six months ago, I think. . . ."

"Yes, uncle, I counted the moons."

"Well, I was worried about you and I hunted for you as much as I could. Twelve days afterwards, the tailor passed this way again, saying he had seen you in good health near Villers and that he had not wanted to make you go with

him. He thought your family had taken you back and were sending you there on an errand. Then I was not disturbed about you any more, and, my poor wife having fallen sick, I didn't leave home any more except to go to sea when I had to, so that I'm quite out of touch with your family. Surely, they think you've gone to sea, since it was agreed with your brother François that was what you were going to do. He will have said so, believing it, too, for his part. Now I think you can go home without fear of being given up again to the tailor. I don't know what you said to him when you met him, but he declared he'd prefer to take the devil as an apprentice than a lad as strange and unruly as you. I thought you had shown him your teeth, and I didn't blame you for it."

"I showed him my stick," said Clopinet. "You predicted it, uncle; I've grown my wings of courage." And thereupon he told all his story, and showed his hundred crowns to the amazed sailor.

"Well," cried Uncle Laquille, "here you are rich, and you can do what you please with your life. The moment you can make yourself useful, no one will refuse to ship you. You can travel to distant countries where there are birds quite as rare and splendid as the egrets: tropical birds, white egrets of America, birds of paradise, phenixes which spring up again from their ashes, condors which carry away beeves, and a hundred others of which you don't even have an idea."

"It's true, travel is what I lack," replied the child. "I know nothing and a person must understand things."

"You can learn by traveling."

This fine-sounding speech of his uncle's did not fully convince Clopinet. Laquille had gone around the world

without having learned to read, and Clopinet began to see, on talking with him, that he had false notions concerning the most simple matters. He believed that certain birds did not eat and lived on air, that others did not hatch but sprang from barnacles, the mollusks which cling to the bottom of boats. Clopinet had a very romantic temperament. He was quite ready to believe in bird-fairies, that is to say, in spirits taking the forms and the voices of birds. However, he had already observed too long the laws of life to share the errors and prejudices of his uncle.

Nevertheless, the idea of traveling tempted him greatly. To entertain himself in his solitude, he had dreamed so much of voyages to foreign parts! Laquille advised him to go to Honfleur and take passage on some vessel leaving for England. There was always one about to sail. The grebes nested there and Clopinet could catch them when he chose. The moment the child knew, however, that one must kill them and skin them to get their plumage, he shook his head. That horrified him. After supper, as he walked with his uncle on the strand, they came back to this subject. Clopinet felt himself disturbed and thrilled by the sight of the great barks which were preparing to sail the next morning for Honfleur. He had about decided to make arrangements with the master of one of these crafts, when he heard passing in the dark night the faint voices of children, the sound he knew so well. "There they are," he cried, "there they are coming to hunt me!" His uncle, not knowing what he meant, stood with his mouth open, waiting for an explanation. Clopinet did not explain; he ran, arms extended, following the flight of the unseen spirits which still called him. First they hugged the strand and seemed to go towards the place of embarkation. All at once they wheeled, left the shore and

made off across the fields. Clopinet followed them as long as he could, but without succeeding in taking wing. He returned out of breath to his uncle, who thought him crazy.

"Come, come, my child," said the good man, "do you really take the curlews for spirits?"

"The curlews? What do you mean, uncle?"

"You don't know those birds? It's true they only journey on very black nights and that one never sees them. People wouldn't know them at all, if they didn't kill them sometimes by shooting into the flock by chance. That's quite unusual, for it's said they fly faster than gunshot. I admit they lay eggs in the clouds, and it's the wind that hatches them."

"No, uncle," cried Clopinet eagerly, "if they are birds, curlews, as you call them, they don't hatch in the clouds. If they're not birds, if these voices are those of spirits, as I'm sure is true, they don't hatch at all. That their song resembles that of the curlews is possible; I myself, the first time I heard them, said: 'There are night-birds passing.' But when I listened to them carefully, I understood their words. They called me, they made me grow wings, they taught me to run on the sea without getting wet, the night I spent on the Great-Black-Cow. They helped me fly away from your house; finally they aided and comforted me. I believe in them, I love them, and wherever they tell me to go, I'll follow them."

"But for all that," said his uncle, "you didn't follow them just now."

"They didn't want me to; but they showed me clearly, by leaving the seashore, that I mustn't sail tonight. They flew from that direction, southward. Tell me if it's that way my home is?"

"It's that direction certainly, three leagues from the sea in a straight line."

"Well, it's that way I must go tomorrow morning. I must go embrace my father and mother, and give them the money I've earned."

"All right, but they'll keep it from you, and you'll not be able to travel any more."

"I'll always be able to go back to my hole in the cliff and get a new store of feathers. From then on, I'll have their permission to be a sailor."

Clopinet followed his plan. He learned the way, and the next day, about noon, he found himself at the gate of his inclosure.

VII

THE first person he saw was his mother, who recognized him even at a distance in spite of the change in him. She nearly died of joy when she clasped him in her arms. Clopinet was very much touched, for he had imagined in his sadness that she only loved him a little bit. He now saw clearly that she loved him very much, the more so because she had not violently opposed letting him go. Father Doucy, Brother François and the others ran up and had a grand celebration, for to see him so well dressed, in such good health and so well cured of his lameness was sufficient proof that he had not suffered on his voyage. They thought he was coming from a distance, and François himself thought so, not having been undeceived by Uncle Laquille, whom he had not seen again.

Father Doucy, however, scolded Clopinet a little for having disposed of himself against the will of his family, and

did not fail to add that, if he did not get so he could earn his living, he would be a burden on his family. Clopinet took the lecture quietly, and without making any fuss handed his purse to his father, saying: "I hope to go on earning my living quite honestly without wronging man or beast. Here's what I've earned for six months' work, and if this money meets your needs or merely your pleasures, I ask you to accept it, dear father. I count on bringing you more next year."

All the family stared with their eyes wide open when they saw Clopinet's louis d'or, but Father Doucy shook his head. "Where did you get this money, my boy? You must explain yourself on that score. Although I'm a peasant and haven't gadded about on sea or in cities, I know well enough that an apprentice cabin-boy or anyone else is well enough paid when, at your age, he earns his living."

Clopinet, seeing that his father suspected him of having done something wrong, told him the truth concerning the source of his wealth and did not find him unbelieving. It was well known in the region that the feathers of certain birds were very much sought after by feather-merchants. Father Doucy merely observed that the egrets were not seen any more in the region of Auge, and that doubtless Clopinet had had to find them far away. He persisted in believing that Clopinet had spent the summer in long voyages. Clopinet had refused when questioned by his Uncle Laquille to reveal the precise spot on the beach where he had spent the summer. With his parents, he did not depart at all from this reserve. He knew that, if he talked of the Black-Cows and of the great cliff, no one at home would think of letting him go to live in a place held to be so dangerous. He let his relatives think he had come from Scotland—his uncle hav-

ing pronounced before him the name of this country—and that he had had good hunting there.

He got out of the many questions asked him the first day quite well. As no one at his home knew what to expect of foreign countries, he did not have to invent long tales. He answered that in Scotland they ate bread, vegetables and meat as elsewhere, that the trees did not put forth their roots into the air; finally, that he had seen nothing marvelous there or elsewhere.

"That's right, that's right," said his father after supper. "What pleases me about you is that you don't tell wild stories like your Uncle Laquille. Go on being sensible, and all will go well, since you're clever enough to bring back things to sell, and to do business. I don't want to take your money away from you. It's yours and I'm going to invest it in good land which will belong to you. That will be the beginning of your fortune."

"If you don't want any of it for yourself," answered Clopinet, "I'd rather use it to go on more voyages and to find other things."

What Laquille had foreseen happened. Father Doucy didn't choose to understand what his son was saying. He was unable to imagine any other investment than plots of grass and apple-trees, with cows within the inclosure. He did not think it wise for a child to have a large sum in his own hands. He congratulated Clopinet for having the wisdom to bring it back home, but he did not think him, for all of that, beyond wasting it, if it was given over to him. Clopinet had to yield; one might say his wings had been cut. He went off to bed quite sorrowful, thinking he could make no more voyages; but he dreamed that the spirits spoke to

him and said: "Be hopeful; we'll not leave you. Since you've done our bidding, we'll reward you fully for it."

He was resigned then, and not entirely indifferent, it must be admitted, to the softness of a good featherbed nicely warmed. For a fortnight since the coldness made itself felt, he had not been very comfortable in his cave. He could not protect himself from the dampness which oozed in and the wind which rushed in. They lived well at Father Doucy's, who was neither poor nor stingy. There was plenty of good bread and good cider, and Mother Doucette had a great skill in making pork soup. Clopinet was her pet; she caressed him and pampered him so tenderly that he could not resist, and let himself be softened by family life, to the point of conceiving the idea of spending the rainy season at home. He saw all the flocks of migratory birds come from the sea and fly toward the interior regions, either to winter in the marshes, or to go hunt for warmer seas. Clopinet told himself it was not the season to find nests so far north. He did not know yet that certain species fly north instead of south and go to hunt the cold.

As he did not want to fib too much, he told his father that no engagement forced him to go to sea again. He wanted to prevail on his parents to allow him his liberty and to see him set off again without objecting. As he could not be left with nothing to do, he had to go back to tending and looking after the cows, which bored him greatly. These heavy and slow beasts pleased him less and less. The flat pasture-land without a view depressed him, for his spirit always hovered about the sea and about the cliffs.

One day, his father sent him to the druggist at Dives to get some medicine. Dives was a very old town. But Clopinet, who was not interested in old things, found the

place very ugly, although it was quite pretty outside in the direction of the open fields. Clopinet, who only looked towards the sea, was not interested in the flat coast, all covered with sand. Then he saw in the narrow channel which replaces the great harbor from which in olden days the fleet of William the Conqueror set sail for England, big barks which went to Honfleur. The desire to go at least that far was so strong he nearly forgot his errand. However, he resisted and had the druggist's house pointed out to him. There, while the drug was made up, he came near forgetting that he must take it back to his parents. The object which absorbed his attention and which threw him into transports of joy, was a sea-peacock, perched on a stick and motionless in the shop-window. The apothecary, amused at Clopinet's wonder, took the bird, which seemed very much alive, for its eyes shone and its beak was open, and let the boy touch it. It was stuffed. Clopinet had no idea of such an art and asked for an explanation. Then, with a spirit and an air of decision which coming all of a sudden from a boy who looked so simple quite surprised the apothecary, Clopinet asked if he would be willing to teach him to preserve and to stuff.

"To be sure!" answered the apothecary, "if you want to help me in this work, it'll please me very much, provided you have as much skill as determination." He then informed Clopinet that the parish-priest and the lord of the near-by castle were amateur ornithologists; that was what the apothecary called the knowledge of birds, their classification into genera, orders and classes. These two gentlemen obtained as many specimens as they could, the nobleman at any price, the parish-priest at the cost of all the money he could put into it. The region was very rich in sea- and shore-birds,

because of the great sand-banks of the coast, and the marshes formed by the Dive. All the hunters watched for this game to carry it to the castle, where the nobleman made a collection of it stuffed. It was he, the apothecary, who was entrusted with the preparation of the birds. He understood the work quite well, but he had no one to aid him and not enough time for it. If he found a painstaking and intelligent pupil, he would willingly pay him, as soon as he knew the business.

"Take me, sir," said Clopinet, "I'm sure to learn quickly and well. I'll even tell you, if it doesn't offend you, that I know live birds better than you. Here is this creature you call a sea-peacock and whose name I don't know. But I've seen it a hundred times at liberty, and I do know how it's built and how it holds itself. You wanted to give it the look it has when it fights. It isn't that way, and if it was something one could mould, I'd show you the attitude it really takes."

The apothecary was a sensible man, which enabled him to judge quickly the intellect of others. He didn't take offense at all at Clopinet's criticisms and said: "To be sure, make a trial; it can be moulded. That is to say, the position of the bird can be changed by pressing on the iron wires which replace the bones and the muscles. Try it; I give you permission. If you spoil it, what's the difference! A sea-peacock isn't anything very rare." Clopinet hesitated a moment, grew pale, trembled, thought hard so that he would remember exactly. Then all of a sudden, seizing the bird with much delicacy, but with great determination, he gave it an attitude so true to life and an appearance so bold, without harming a single feather, that the apothecary was quite surprised.

"I confess," he said, "that your pose has a more natural look than mine. However, mine was more vigorous."

"What do you say, sir?" asked Clopinet.

"I mean that mine had a more ill-natured appearance. These birds are fierce creatures."

"But you are mistaken, sir," cried Clopinet with conviction. "Birds aren't ill-natured when hunger doesn't force them to fight. These birds don't fight to harm each other. It's a game they play to show off when one's looking at them. I'll describe it to you. They separate, all the males on one side and all the females on the other, with the little ones. They select piles of sand where they stand in a row, the females on another heap watching them. Then the old ones say to the young ones: 'Come, children, let's see if you know how to fight.' Then two young ones step forward and pummel one another until they fall down from fatigue; and afterwards two others. Sometimes there are two pairs who fight at the same time, but always one against one and never one band against another, neither on account of the females nor for food. When the hour of this sport is over, they go walk about or feed together, and are good friends."

"That may be," said the apothecary, laughing. "If you've watched birds so carefully, you know more about them than I do. I admit this champion pleases me better, changed and set up as it is there. I think you are an observer and perhaps a born artist."

Clopinet did not understand all of this, but his heart beat fast with joy when the apothecary said to him: "Come back tomorrow. I'll teach you the trade, which is very easy. Since you have artistic sense, which is a gift of nature, I'll send you to the lord of the castle. You'll learn the natural his-

tory of birds, and you'll some day be curator of the collections at his or some one else's house. Who knows but what you were born to be a scholar?"

Clopinet only understood one thing, that he was going to see birds new to him, and that he would learn the names and the natural abodes of those whose appearance, song, plumage and habits he already knew. He flew rather than ran to his father and easily got permission to go *work with birds*. "Since it's his idea," said his father, regarding his wife with a smile, "and the apothecary is a prince of a man, I think, Mother Doucette, you'll not be at all sorry to know the child is working in a place not far away where we'll see him often."

Mother Doucette would have preferred that the child should not leave her at all. But when her husband had spoken, honoring her with a smile, she could only approve. Moreover, she always trembled at the thought that Clopinet might return to Scotland where, in reality, he had never been. She believed Scotland was located quite at the end of the world.

At the end of a month, Clopinet knew-very well how to make the preparation of arsenic with which birds are preserved. He could take off the skin of a bird with perfect neatness, turning it back as one rolls back a glove, without soiling or crumpling a single feather. He knew the little bones that must be kept to fasten the iron wires to, those bones which must be cut, how to replace the animal's frame with metal wires of assorted sizes. He knew how to select in the stock of glass eyes those which exactly suited such winged creatures. He could stuff the body with tow, keeping the exact form, sew it up with so much skill that no one could detect the seam, and then set the bird on its feet,

closing or opening its wings at will. As to giving it the grace and unique quality of its natural pose, he was past master in this from the very first day.

The apothecary, who only asked to sell his preparations and to clear his laboratory of the work of stuffing, thought at once of introducing Clopinet into the household of the Baron of Platecôte. This was that nobleman in love with ornithology on whose specimens Clopinet was working, without his talents being yet revealed to the vicar. The vicar, although making researches and exchanges with the baron, was a little jealous of him and would have tried to keep Clopinet for his own work.

The apothecary was a kind man as well as a clever one, and he took an interest in Clopinet, whose sweetness and good sense were out of the ordinary. He now took him to the baron's castle, and introduced him personally as a youth, capable, intelligent and hard-working.

"I don't doubt it," replied the baron courteously, "but it's a child. He's very neat and very pleasing, but he's a little country-boy who knows nothing."

"Your lordship, who knows everything," said the apothecary, "may teach him what you please. Your lordship has no children and could take an interest in this one, who would become a good and faithful servant. I strongly urge your lordship to take him at once, for the vicar will not let him get away, when he sees the masterpieces he can produce."

With these words the apothecary opened the box he had brought, and placed three different kinds of birds on the table. To each of them Clopinet had been able so well to give the appearance which was peculiar to it, that the baron who knew excellent work cried out in surprise and admiration. "I see plainly," he said, "that it's not you at all,

sir, who have done this. Will you swear to me that it was all done by this good child here?"

"I swear it, my lord."

"All by himself?"

"All by himself."

"Well! I'll take him; leave him with me. He'll have no cause to regret being in my service."

VIII

ON THAT very day, Clopinet was installed at the manor of Platecôte, in a tiny room right up under the roof. The first thing he did before looking at the room, which was very nice, was to stick his head out of the window and take note of the country round about. It was marvelously beautiful, for the castle was built on a high hill. On one side one could see the valley of the Auge, the course of the Dive, and that of the Orne, with their woods and their gently rolling meadows; on the other the ocean and the seacoast for a great distance. Clopinet recognized at once the notched points of the great cliff. He saw them still better on looking at them through a small telescope, installed on the turret of the castle, and perched still higher than his room. He made out with delight the Black-Cows showing their backs over the waves, and, on the side of the open country, his parents' home, the thatch showing through the yellowed leaves of the apple-trees. He felt quite drunk with joy to live so high in the air and to be able to add to the fine view the marvelous power of this telescope, which gave a range of vision as far-reaching as that of the birds. He saw and recognized all the lay of the land, all the hamlets and

villages of the seacoast. He recognized Trouville, and made out the point back of which Honfleur is hidden.

Another joy was to be installed the next day in the apartment which was given to him for a laboratory. There the vials, materials and tools which the apothecary had sent for his use had already been placed. From this apartment one entered directly into the baron's museum, and Clopinet saw there, in the great glass cases, a quantity of birds, strangers and natives more or less valuable. All were very interesting to whoever wanted to learn their names and their classifications.

The baron had come to meet him there, to explain to him what work he intended to give him to do. Clopinet, with the confidence which simplicity of heart gives, said: "My lord, your collection of birds is not well arranged. Here's a little one which has been put with the other small ones, but that's not right at all. It ought to be beside those big ones there because it's of their family, I'm sure. It has their beak, their feet, and it feeds as they do. I know it, I recognize it. If it wasn't exactly that one I saw, it was one which resembled it and must have been a cousin or nephew."

The baron encouraged Clopinet's prattle. He was naturally not talkative at all, but when on the subject of birds always had a great deal to say. The baron wondered at the boy's good reasoning power and the sureness of his observations, which were no less remarkable than his memory. In one morning he knew all the names that the baron cared to tell him, and he repeated them without making any mistake. But, suddenly, when he saw that the baron was yawning, taking many pinches of snuff and being generally bored with playing the professor for an unlearned

person: "My lord," said Clopinet, "it's still too soon for me to enter your service. It'll be a burden for you to teach me. I ought to be in a position to teach myself all alone, and for that I must be able to read. Let me go to the house of his reverence. It's his business to be patient. When I've learned to read I'll come back here."

"No indeed, no indeed!" said the baron, "you'll not go to the priest. My valet is quite well educated; he'll teach you."

The valet read fluently. He had a good handwriting and knew enough French to write a passable letter under the dictation of the baron, who was learned and a wit, but of too good a family to be able to spell. It wasn't the fashion at this time for people of fashion to be able to spell. Mr. La Fleur, the valet, was now installed as schoolmaster to the little peasant, although rather cross about it and bringing very little patience to the work. With most children one must have patience. But with those who, like Clopinet, have a great passion for work, and who fear to see the opportunity escape, a lazy or cross professor does well enough. Clopinet made determined efforts not to tire out the very ordinary mind of Mr. La Fleur, and at the end of a year he could read, write and figure as well as his teacher.

That did not satisfy him. The scientific names of birds are Latin, and many of the works which treat of the natural sciences are written in Latin. Clopinet in his free time went to stuff birds at the house of the parish-priest, on condition that while he worked the priest would teach him Latin. And in another year, he knew all the Latin he had need of in his profession.

While thus improving himself, he stuffed all the native or foreign birds which were sent or carried to him by those who supplied specimens for the baron. He repaired or renewed those of the collection which were poorly prepared or the worse for wear. He proceeded also with a better arrangement after discussions, sometimes very spirited, with his master. The baron thought he knew all there was to know about birds, and did not readily admit he might be mistaken. Clopinet with the stubborn determination of his character and the honesty of his natural intellect always succeeded in persuading his master. Then the baron, who wasn't at all stupid, shrugged his shoulders, and, pretending to be moved by weariness or by good nature, said: "Do as you please, then! For such a trifle I don't want to vex you or excite myself." It wasn't a little thing, though. The priest, who although less rich in specimens was none the less better informed and even more intelligent than the baron, held Clopinet in high esteem. He declared that if Buffon ever came to know the boy, he would help him make his way.

Clopinet was none the prouder for this. He knew very well the respect due Buffon, whose magnificent work he read eagerly. However, he had the sort of mind that nothing in the world interested except the things of nature. He cared nothing for money, or for fame. He went on dreaming only of voyages, discoveries and observations made by himself and himself alone.

He also thought unceasingly of his hermitage in the great cliff, and the more he became used to the comfort of life in the castle, the more he missed his bed of rocks, his wild flowers, the song of free birds, and especially the

confidence he could inspire in them. The remembrance of that strange intimacy especially gripped his heart. "Where are they now," he said to himself, "all the poor little companions of my solitude? Where are my gotwits, who imitated so well the bleating of sheep and the barking of dogs? Where is the great solitary bittern who bellowed like a bull? Where are the pretty frolicsome lapwings, who cried into my ears, borrowing the voice of the tailor, *eighteen, eighteen*? Where are the curlews, whose sweet childish voices called me on the dark nights, and made me grow enchanted wings, wings of courage?"

It may be seen that Clopinet did not believe any longer in the spirits of the night. He was no more contented because of that. He regretted the time when he could make out the words of his little friends of the dark sky and of the stormy wind. The surroundings in which he now found himself did not bring him anything of the marvelous. At this time, everyone prided himself on being a philosopher, even the priest, and particularly Mr. La Fleur, who talked a good deal about Voltaire without ever having read him, pretending to have a great scorn for country superstitions.

When Clopinet had reached the age of sixteen years in the baron's employ, he found he had secured, from the point of view of ornithology, all the instruction he could get in the castle and its vicinity. He was seized by the strong desire to go ask of nature the secrets that one doesn't find in books. He felt ill, and everyone noticed how pale he was. He now thought seriously of freeing himself. Although he was very well satisfied with his master and was attached to him, he made known his resolve to make a journey, promising to bring back all the things of interest

he could gather together for the museum. The baron reproached him for leaving his service, the education he claimed to be giving him, and for lack of gratitude for kindness shown. To keep him, he offered to raise his salary to the same figure as that of La Fleur, and no longer to have him eat his meals in the servants' hall. Clopinet thought himself sufficiently well paid, and did not feel humiliated by eating in the servants' hall. He refused these offers with thanks. "Perhaps," said the baron, "you don't like to wear a livery? I'll order a little black suit made for you, like that of the apothecary." Clopinet still declined; he thought himself only too richly clad. Then the baron became angry, called him ungrateful and crazy, threatened to throw him over, and declared he would strike out from his will the little pension he had set down in Clopinet's favor. This also had no effect. Clopinet kissed his employer's hand, saying that, disinherited or not, he would always love him just as much and would remain devoted to him. He would die, though, if he stayed as cooped up as he had been for three years. He was like the birds and must have space and liberty, even though it brought all sorts of misfortunes.

The baron, seeing he could do nothing, resigned himself and dismissed Clopinet kindly, paying him his wages and adding to that a nice present. Clopinet refused the gift in money, but asked the baron to give him a portable telescope and some instruments. The baron gave them to him, and made him also keep the money.

Then Clopinet, seeing him so kind, thought himself ungrateful indeed. Throwing himself at his master's feet, he renounced all his dreams. He merely asked eight days' leave, promising to come back and do his best to get used to

the life of the castle his patron made so pleasant for him. The baron, deeply moved, embraced him, and supplied him with all that he needed for a journey of eight days.

On a fine spring morning, Clopinet, after having given a day to his parents, departed alone for the great cliff. He had been so diligent in the work which the baron entrusted to him and so eager to improve himself with the priest that he had never permitted himself to lose an hour walking out for his personal pleasure. He had not seen the Black-Cows again, and was anxious to observe close-by the havoc the sea must have made in his absence. Considerable landslides had been mentioned at the baron's and at the apothecary's. From the turrets, however, Clopinet had seen that the jagged summits of the great cliff were still standing, and he only half believed what he was told.

Clad in a strong peasant's smock, shod in thick shoes and with good canvas gaiters, wearing on his head a woollen cap which gusts of wind could not blow off, carrying on his back a strong traveling-bag to hold his instruments, one or two volumes of catalogues, his telescope and some food, he quickly reached the dunes. He was unable to follow the strand, which was blocked in several places by the slipping of the clay. As he advanced, keeping half-way up the hill, he saw a striking change. Here, where there had been plants, there was only mud, very hard to go through without getting mired in. There, where soft places had been, the soil had hardened and was covered with plants. Clopinet no longer knew where he was. The old foot-paths he had marked out were gone. He had to begin a new apprenticeship to learn his way, and avoid the cracks and the precipices. Finally, he came to the great cliff, which was

still there, but whose sides, worn and cut down, no longer permitted him to mount to his hermitage.

IX

HE ALMOST gave it up, but he had looked forward so eagerly to finding his nest again that he persisted. By dint of hunting about he succeeded in finding a quite difficult passage but not too dangerous. He took the risk and finally came to the rocky part, where with a lively satisfaction he found almost as they had been, his garden, his gallery, his window and his cave. He at once busied himself making his new arrangements. His bed of dry grasses was quickly cut and put down. After a great house-cleaning, for various birds had left their trace in his abode, he cut many armfuls of dry sea-rushes, and lighted a fire to render the cave thoroughly wholesome. He even burned berries of the juniper-tree to perfume it. He made his frugal meal there. Then, stretching out on the plants of his wild garden, where the same flowers he had loved bloomed, more beautiful than ever, he took a good nap. He had got up very early and was tired on account of traveling through the roughened dunes.

As soon as he had rested, he wished to attempt the ascent of the great cliff to see if it was still inhabited by the same birds. He succeeded after a thousand difficulties and a thousand dangers. He found no longer any trace of nests, and was not able to pick up a single feather. The egrets had abandoned the place. This was a sign that destruction threatened, their instinct having warned them. Where had they taken refuge? Clopinet no longer desired to take up again his little business in feathers, for he thought him-

self rich enough. He would have liked to see his old friends again and to know if they recognized him after his long absence, which was not very probable.

Looking about, he saw that a great crevice had opened in the slope of the cliff. He cautiously went into it. It was like a new street which had been hollowed in his deserted city. It led him to lower levels where he was quite surprised to find himself close by his hermitage and to see the rocks all whitened by the droppings of the birds. Nothing more was necessary for him to come upon many nests where eggs, warmed by the sun, awaited the night to be brooded on. About the nests many feathers revealed the passage of the males. The egrets had changed their residence, and the choice they had made of the neighborhood of the cave proved that it was still solidly perched in the folds of the cliff. Gratified by this discovery, Clopinet easily returned home by crossing a little hollow in the ground. He was delighted to have his old friends under his thumb, so to speak.

Decidedly Clopinet loved solitude, for this day in the wilderness seemed to him like a reward after a long banishment bravely endured. He renewed acquaintance with all the extensions of the dunes, and learned their new arrangement. He joyfully saw again his good Black-Cows, still covered with shellfish. He bathed in the sea with delight, and made again all his former observations of the birds who frequent this shore or who camp here while migrating. There was nothing left for him to find out about them, save that these were not the same individuals or that they were forgetful. They did not seem to recognize him at all and weren't inclined to draw near to the bread he

held out to them. However, it was still a treat for them, and as soon as he had gone back a little, they threw themselves on the crumbs he had scattered and quarrelled over them with loud cries. He did not despair of taming them anew during the short time he would spend in the cliff. He wished to stay there all the time of his liberty, without quite knowing why he liked it so well.

It is certain that, when one is young, one gives oneself up to likes and dislikes without accounting for it very much. Clopinet was not, however, the same child who for six months had led that wild existence. He was now quite well educated, for he knew the reasons for things which pleased him formerly. He had loved the sea, the rocks, the birds, the flowers and the clouds before knowing why these things are lovely. Study and comparison had taught him what is the beautiful, the terrible and the graceful. He now enjoyed it doubly, and he might have been grateful to himself for having loved nature before he understood it. But he was modest like all those who live thoughtfully and wonderingly. It was nature he thanked for having been willing to reveal herself to him without anyone's aid.

Dame Nature provided a treat by again giving him the sight with which she had entertained him three years before, the first night of his residence in the cliff. There was at the setting of the sun a great piling up of black clouds edged with red fire, and the ocean was all phosphorescent. When he had gone into the cave, the wind rose and the merry-making became a little too rough. Torrents of rain streamed around the hermitage, but the moon lovely in any and every case still put green diamonds into the foliage which festooned the entrance. Clopinet slept in the

midst of the tumult, and took pleasure in being awakened from time to time by the crash of the thunder. One of these crashes was, however, so violent that he felt the shock of it. He found himself, without knowing why, standing beside his bed. A thousand plaintive cries filled the air above him, and an instant later he felt himself actually beaten by a multitude of great wings which moved noiselessly around him in his cave. It was his neighbors whose encampment had been struck by the lightning. The bewildered females had left their broken eggs. Driven by the wind, they were come to fall in Clopinet's garden and take refuge almost in his dwelling with outcries of terror and grief. He was very sorry for them, and, taking great care not to thrust them away, he lay down and went to sleep in the midst of these poor birds, some of them lying half-dead on his bed.

As soon as daylight came, all those who still had the use of their wings flew away, but many were injured. Clopinet took care of his poor guests as well as he could. He then went to see the disaster to the colony. There he heard the mournful cries of the brooding hens vainly searching for their eggs, and he tried to repair some nests. But the electric current had cooked the eggs which were not broken, and the colony, seeing that there was no more hope, called each other with cries of distress. They gathered together on a rock where they seemed to take counsel. Then with farewell moans they took flight over the sea and disappeared in the fog, without his being able to see what had become of them.

When they did not come back the next day or the following days, Clopinet thought they had said goodbye, forever

perhaps, to this unfriendly strand. He returned to his invalids, and in a short time they grew tame, ate out of his hand, let themselves be handled, scratched and warmed. Then they set to walking around him, and to settling down. Some went to sleep in the cave, others in the garden to recover in the sun. A strange thing it was—they seemed to have forgotten the disaster to their offspring, and did not try to go see what had become of them. They answered with little mournful and hoarse notes the loud call of those who were departing, and resigned themselves to domesticity as if to a new existence against which it was useless to protest.

Clopinet was in a position to study something which had always interested him deeply, the degree of intelligence which is developed in animals when instinct can no longer be sufficient to preserve them. He spent the days sometimes observing these convalescents more or less crippled who surrendered themselves to him, sometimes gathering in feathered guests of other species whom he found lying on all sides as he looked about the cliff. The storm had brought birds he had never seen close-by, spoon-bills and cormorants. That evening, the cave was filled with them. He had to give them all the rest of his bread and go to bed with an empty stomach.

The next morning he hastened to breakfast at Auberville, the village where he had formerly laid in supplies, and brought back sufficient food to meet the needs of his infirmity. There were during these days deaths and recoveries. Clopinet still went to gather together the cripples on the heights. The free and uninjured individuals watched for him to pick up the crumbs he left behind, and a few days were sufficient to render them as tame as formerly. Clopinet

thought he recognized among those who became tame the most quickly the ones whom he had already tamed.

But he always noted a great difference in character between the birds which, while becoming used to approaching him, remained independent and those whom wounds and faintness produced by the lightning had made dependent on him. These last became so confident in his presence that they were almost a nuisance. Their inability to fly or walk quickly developed selfishness and greediness in the invalids, while the others remained active and proud. Clopinet preferred the latter, and, although he took more care of those who needed him the most, he could not help despising a little their easy surrender to misfortune.

Although pity held him with them, he hoped to get them all back into condition to resume their wild life. He was too experienced in building again their bony frame not to know their anatomy very well, and he succeeded with marvelous skill in setting their feet and their broken wings. However, those thus mended who after a very few days were capable of going to seek their living were so badly received by the free ones, that they returned quite dejected to take refuge at Clopinet's feet. He had to drive back and severely lecture the attackers who were trying to pluck them or tear them to pieces. In these strange combats in which he had to interfere, I leave you to decide whether he observed with interest all the manners of these feathered personages.

Finally Clopinet thought, at the end of the week, of leaving the cliff and of returning to his master. It was in all events time to think of leaving, the cliff having been very much damaged by the last storm. Near the ruined nest of the egrets, a new crack had appeared, and the chalk weakened

by the rain began to run down as far as Clopinet's garden. This made him feel badly, for this little hollow was filled with good plant soil where formerly he had amused himself growing the prettiest plants of the near-by fields, brooms, delicious sea-lavenders of a clear lilac color and exquisite shape, and pretty convolvuluses with a rose corolla brightly streaked with white, their leaves thick and glossy. These flowers spread their graceful festoons as far as the sand wet by the tide. In the absence of Clopinet, all these plants had flourished and spread up to the entrance of the cave. They were going to disappear forever under the un pitying advance of the heavy and solid chalk. After a little while, or perhaps right away, under the action of rain and lightning, the garden and all the cave would be filled. Clopinet was too observant and too used to watching the state of the landslides to fear being suddenly surprised. However, he now slept, so to speak, with one eye open, and he counted the days, saying to himself: "Here's another fine day which dries up all this mud. However, if it rains tomorrow, perhaps I'll have to turn out on the double-quick and look at the end of my little world."

In this expectation, to save his birds from the disaster, he resolved to carry them to the parish-priest at Dives, knowing that he loved to keep living creatures, while the Baron of Platecôte liked them better dead and stuffed. The priest was more of a naturalist, the baron more of a collector. Clopinet, certain that the priest would look after these winged creatures, went to cut sticks of dry wood in the fields. He set himself to making a basket large enough to carry everybody without smothering. He thought it would be too heavy for him to carry, for they were very large birds, and went to hire a donkey which he made climb as far as the

entrance to his garden, ready to be on his way with it the next morning.

X

THE night was very bad and the landslides advanced a great deal. Clopinet had to get up before daybreak. He gathered together all his pets, gave them breakfast, put them carefully in the grass-lined basket. He then loaded them on the pack-saddle of the donkey, which had also had a good breakfast. Holding up the beast as well as he could, he made it climb down the cliff to the edge of the sea. He had calculated the time so that he was there at the moment when the tide beginning to ebb permitted him to proceed to Dives along the beach. However, when the donkey heard the sea so close, for it was still too dark for it to be able to see, the poor beast was taken with a terrible fright. It remained all trembling, its ears lying back, without trying to advance or retreat. Clopinet was very patient, and in place of beating it he petted it, so as to give it time to get used to the noise of the waves.

Just then, he thought he saw on the great Black-Cow, which always showed its back above the waves, something very strange. It wasn't yet light enough for him to be able to make out what it was. It seemed to have a small body with long feet which moved. Clopinet thought it was a huge octopus. His curiosity to see so extraordinary an animal made him leave the donkey and go towards the sea. The monster moved all the while, first one foot, then the other. Its body seemed glued to the rock. Clopinet was afraid this strange creature would detach itself before he had been able to observe it and decide what it was. He undressed quickly,

threw his clothes on the donkey, which did not budge at all, and jumped into the sea. The surge was very strong and prevented him from advancing other than by clinging to the scattered and submerged rocks which he knew perfectly. Finally he could go close enough to see that this octopus was a man clinging to the top of the Great-Cow and giving no uncertain signs of distress. But what an odd man it was! He was so frightfully built that Clopinet thought of the grotesque tailor who had been the terror of his childhood. Only he could be as ugly as the deformed being whose big head and long lean limbs Clopinet perceived through wet and clinging garments. He swam towards the creature, and thought he heard a voice which cried out to him: "Help, help!" Clopinet reached the last rock lifting itself before one came to the Big-Cow. He was only a very short distance from the castaway, and could make sure, thanks to the daylight which increased rapidly, that it was indeed the wretched hunchback of whom he had retained a memory full of disgust and aversion, although he had not seen him for three years. He called out: "Don't stir; wait for me!"

This was useless. Whether Pull-to-the-left did not hear, or whether the tide in going out swept him away in spite of himself, he made a supreme effort to stretch out his long arms to Clopinet, and let go his hold. In an instant, he was carried away by the waves which whirled around the rock, and disappeared. Clopinet, standing on the rock on which he had stopped to get his breath, rested a moment undecided and as if frozen by fear of death. One thinks quickly in such moments. He knew that the tailor was going, if he brought aid, to cling like grim death. He would twist himself about his rescuer like a real octopus so that Clopinet could not swim, and drag him to the bottom. To die sud-

denly a frightful death, one so young and so curious about life, trying to bring aid to a being as crafty, as wicked and as ugly as this tailor, seemed foolish. Clopinet hesitated an instant—a very short instant, for there was in his ears a musical sound which he knew at once. It was the energetic and tender song of his little friends, the winged spirits of the sea, and these caressing voices said to him: “Your wings, open your wings! we are here!”

Clopinet felt his wings of courage open very wide, wide like those of a sea-eagle, and he jumped into the whirling surge. He never knew how he was able to seize hold of the tailor in the midst of the foam, which blinded him, struggle with the drowning man, conquer with supernatural strength the huge billow which was carrying them away from the land; finally, to get back to the Great-Cow and there fall exhausted on the body of the unconscious cast-away. All that happened as in a dream; but at this moment, no one could have persuaded Clopinet that the good spirits which had helped him before had not again played their part. He stood up quickly calling to them: “Thank you, thank you, my dears!” He turned the tailor over on his stomach and held him flat down, head hanging, to make him give out the water he had swallowed. He rubbed him as hard as he could until he saw that he had got back his breath. After five minutes, Pull-to-the-left revived entirely, and, trying to speak, cried out in consequence of the last choking sensation he had to overcome. He tried to throw himself into the water again to reach the shore more quickly. He was like a madman. Clopinet succeeded in saving him, slapping him with the flat of his hand, which completed his recovery.

“Don’t be afraid,” said Clopinet when the tailor was able

to understand what was said. "In an instant this rock will be quite uncovered, and we can return to the shore dry-shod. I've managed to warm you up a little. If you get cold again now, it will be bad for you."

Pull-to-the-left submitted; at the end of a quarter of an hour he was on the shore drying himself thoroughly. He ate Clopinet's bread before a roaring fire of dry grass that this good child had lighted on a part of the dune where the tide did not mount.

It was then that the tailor was able to tell Clopinet how, in spite of his terror of the sea, he had let it surprise him and sweep him away. "I must," he said, "confess one thing. I make a poor living at my trade, and since the day when I saw you decked out with three beautiful feathers, I've had no other ambition than to discover the hiding-place of the egrets. I've seen them plainly enough flying above and around that wretched cliff, but I didn't dare risk myself up there. Although I cover the ground and climb very well, God didn't give me any courage at all. I was afraid to take the risk all alone, or to give myself over to the devil as you have."

"Mr. Tailor," said Clopinet, "you need to clear up your ideas, for you are foolish to believe in the devil. When you assert I've given myself to him, I declare to you, without wishing to be rude, that you're telling a whopper."

The tailor, who was quarrelsome and a good fighter, hung his head and apologized, for he had found his master.

"My dear Mr. Clopinet," he said, "I owe it to you that I'm still ornamenting this world. I'm grateful to you for it, and the ladies will bless you."

"Since you're witty, and good-naturedly poke fun at yourself, I pardon you," said Clopinet.

But the tailor wasn't poking fun at himself at all. He believed firmly in his personal charms, and he asserted very seriously that the fair sex found him attractive and were rivals for his affections. Clopinet was then seized with such a fit of laughter that he fell over on his back holding his sides and stamping his feet. The tailor would have been angry if he had dared, but he did not and went on with his story.

"That's the sort of thing which ruined me," he said. "You can laugh about it, but it's only too true that I left this part of the country at the summons of a widow who wanted to marry me. She'd made me believe she was rich, and I was going to consent, although she wasn't in her first youth. I then discovered that she didn't have a penny, not even enough to pay a small drink-bill for me. I was then left in the lurch there, and I came back this way, grieved to death, my purse flat and my stomach empty. I was forced to ask a bit of bread from the baker of Villers. Yesterday evening the idea came to me to hunt the egrets I had always dreamed about. The baker told me you had sold three thousand crowns' worth of feathers to the lord of Platecôte, who had adopted you for his man-servant and his heir. At least that's what's said in this part of the country. Then I took it into my head that I must risk my life, trying to find the egrets people saw flying this way. The birds had to be surprised before daybreak when they left the edge of the sea. So I left Villers at midnight, thinking to arrive at the Black-Cows before the tide. It must be that the baker's cuckoo-clock was slow, or that he'd made me drink a little too much. He's a man of wit who loves educated people, and wasn't sorry to make me taste his cider while chatting with me that night. Anyhow, whether it was the cider or the

cuckoo, or the devil who was to blame for it, I was caught by the tide before daylight appeared, and carried out on this rock where without you I would be dead."

"That is to say," said Clopinet, "with a little presence of mind and reason you might have stayed there safely until the tide went out. Anyhow here you are safe and sound. Take these two crowns and go in peace. I've had enough of your company."

The tailor was lost in thanks. He would have kissed Clopinet's hands, if Clopinet had let him. The tide was far out. The donkey was now quite reassured and quite disposed to carry to Dives the menagerie destined for the parish-priest. Clopinet had also gathered many plants which his friend, the apothecary, had asked him to bring back. There was a big bunch of them tied on the hind-quarters of the donkey. The tailor, although dismissed, did not go away, and regarded the cage and the sheaf of plants with a curiosity full of greed.

"You may," Clopinet told him, "make yourself useful and earn something gathering herbs like these. As to the birds of the dune, whatever sort they may be, I forbid you to set traps for them or disturb their nests."

"The shore-birds are for any one," said the tailor with a sly timidity. "Those are magnificent egrets in that cage. You've captured them; they're yours. But there are more of them. If you had pity for a poor man you'd tell where these birds hide themselves during the day, and by what means one may get there without falling down. You're certainly still alive, and you've got this rich prize."

"Mr. Pull-to-the-left," replied Clopinet, "you want to do what I forbade you to do, and you're not afraid to dis-

please me after what I did for you. Well, listen what awaits you, if you want to scale the cliff!"

"What?" said the tailor unbelieving.

"You don't hear anything?"

"I hear it thundering in the direction of Honfleur."

"That's not thunder; it's the cliff giving way. We must hurry!"

Clopinet made his donkey quicken its pace, and the tailor sped along ahead. When the tailor found himself far from danger, he halted terrified by a frightful noise. Turning around, he saw a section of the mountain giving way so that great rocks were hurled far and wide into the sea. There they mingled, a fearful herd of white cows, with the somber herd of black cows, who had preceded them. Clopinet had stopped, and also turned around. He saw the ruins of the stone-work of his hermitage and of his observatory roll down with this bank of rocks.

"Mr. Pull-to-the-left," he said to the tailor when he had come up with him, "I have there a country-house, a garden, and egrets in free quarters close by. Go take possession of it, if you want to!"

The tailor, ashamed, shook his head. He was forever cured of the fancy of trapping sea-birds and scaling the cliffs.

Clopinet was sorrowful as he went on his way. He had loved this hermitage as one loves a person. The hardships he had undergone there, the dangers he had faced, the pleasant or frightful dreams he had had, all presented themselves to him again like heart-bonds an unavoidable disaster had just broken forever. "Dame Nature," he thought, "isn't always a very comfortable hostess. She has very hard rules people take for whims, if they don't understand them. One must love her in spite of everything, for what she takes

from you with one hand, she gives you back with the other. I'll surely find a hole again some day where I'll be able to live face to face with her."

Clopinet played the truant along the strand, for it was his last holiday. He did not arrive at Dives until evening, and no one saw his load of birds. He carried it mysteriously to the vicarage, begging the priest not to tell the baron where these riches came from. "I'll look out for that!" cried the delighted priest. "He wouldn't rest until he'd got all these charming living creatures away from me to make mummies out of them. He'll not see them. Don't worry about that!"

Clopinet left the priest and his servant working hard to lodge their new guests well before evening, and went to carry the plants to the apothecary. Finally, he went back to go to bed, heavy-hearted, in the manor of Platecôte.

XI

THE next day, the baron found Clopinet at his place in the laboratory. He looked well and seemed to be cured; but two days later the poor child was as pale and as low-spirited as before. Plied with questions, he finally said to his protector: "My lord, you must let me go. I'm not able to live here any longer. I thought a little fresh air and travel would cure me, but I was mistaken. I must have more time than that. I'll have to have a year, perhaps even longer; I don't know. Don't be kind to me any more; I don't deserve it. But don't hate me. I'd die of grief and not be able to make any use of the liberty you let me have."

The baron, seeing Clopinet so moved, showed himself very good-hearted. Consoling Clopinet as best he could, he

swore that he would never cease to be interested in him. But before giving himself up to the necessity of seeing Clopinet leave for a long time, perhaps forever, for a voyager's life is full of dangers, he demanded that the boy should quite unbosom himself. He supposed there had been some after-thought, and didn't at all understand Clopinet's love for solitude.

"Well!" said Clopinet, "I'm going to tell you everything, at the risk of seeming foolish or crazy. I love birds, let us come to an understanding on that, live birds, and I have to live with them. I love to see them painted, for painting gives an idea of life. It seems to me that some day I could become capable of presenting by drawing and color the creatures I have had the time to observe carefully and truly understand. However, stuffing birds has become odious to me. To live in the midst of these dead bodies, to dissect this poor dead flesh, follow the profession of embalmer, I can't do it any more. It seems to me that I absorb death and that I'm becoming mummified myself. You admire the fine appearance and the luster I know how to give to birds. For me, they are ghosts which pursue me in my dreams and demand of me the life I'm not able to give them again. When I spend the evening in the glass gallery, I think I hear them peck on the glass with their beaks to reclaim from me the use of their wings which I've tied with my wire. These ghosts give me the creeps, and I'm horrified at myself for making them. I don't have to reproach myself, however, with their death, for I've never killed but one bird, just one, to eat, pressed as I was by hunger. I've never forgiven myself, and I've sworn I'd never kill a second. It's no less true, however, that I see the death of all those I prepare. This idea disturbs me and pursues me like remorse.

And then, . . . and then . . . there's still another thing I dare not, that I perhaps would not know how to tell you."

"What else is there?" asked the baron. "You must tell me everything as if to your best friend."

"Well," replied Clopinet, "there are on the sea and the beaches voices which speak to me. I'm the only one who can understand. People believe and assert that birds utter love-calls or cries of fear or uneasiness. Men don't need to understand these cries, for they're never addressed to creatures of another species. This may be so, but there are some of them I do understand. They say to me what I ought to do when I hesitate in the face of my duty. I think there are good spirits around us which take certain shapes before our eyes. They borrow certain voices to show us their friendship and to lead us by a straight path. I don't claim they actually do miracles, but they do bring them about by changing with their good suggestions our selfish instincts and cowardice into bursts of courage and self-sacrifice. That astonishes you, my dear master, but nevertheless I've sometimes heard you tell eloquently how, in the study of science, nature speaks to us with all her voices, that she thus frees us from ambition and from vanity, so that she keeps us pure and makes us better. I've drunk in your words, and these voices of nature; I've understood them. I'm drunk with their magic; I can't live without hearing them. They don't speak to me at all here; let me go away. They will surely command me to come back to bring to you what I've found, as they've already told me to go and do my duty towards my parents. I'll come back; but let me follow them. At this very moment they are calling me and want me to become a truly learned person, a real student of nature."

The baron thought Clopinet was up to a certain point

in the right, but that he had an over-stimulated imagination. He must be permitted to amuse himself by traveling. The baron attended to everything which would make a voyage easier. Having provided Clopinet generously with money, luggage and instruments, he saw him off on one of those big boats which, two or three times a year, still make the trip from Dives to Honfleur. There, Clopinet took passage for England. From there he went on into Scotland, Ireland and other near-by islands. Free and happy amid the wildest scenery, studying everything and thinking it out for himself, at the end of a year he remembered he must return. He brought back to the baron a wealth of new facts which often disproved what the naturalists had been saying. However, his observations were as true as they were new.

The next year, after having spent some weeks with his family and friends, Clopinet set out to Switzerland, Germany and as far as the Polish, Russian and Turkish provinces. Later, he visited the north of Russia and a part of Asia, buying everywhere the birds which the people of the country killed in the hunt. He mummified these birds to send to the baron, whose collection became one of the finest in France. However, Clopinet himself kept his word to kill nothing, and to have nothing killed for his own use. It was his passion, and science may have perhaps lost by it some precious specimens which with less scruples he would have been able to obtain. Instead, he enriched the baron with so many true and new documents straightening out long-established mistakes, that he had no grounds at all for complaint. He gave himself for a long time the credit for the discoveries of his pupil, and published his notes in the form of scientific works in which he forgot to mention Clopinet. Clopinet saw nothing amiss in this, not having any ambition

himself. He thought himself perfectly happy to satisfy his passion for nature. The baron, having attained a certain reputation, which had been the aim of all his expenditures, was not ungrateful to Clopinet. He died making the young man his sole heir. His nephews commenced a great lawsuit against this miserable little pedant, who had, according to them, curried the favor of the deceased. The will was in good form, and Clopinet might perhaps have won the suit. However, he hated quarrels, and accepted the first compromise which was offered to him. He was left the manor and the museum, with enough land to live there modestly and be able to travel economically.

He thought he had been favored by fortune and destiny. He was able to travel around the world while his family and that of his Uncle Laquille lived in his castle. He came back from time to time to keep in good order with filial care the baron's collection. He grew old in this unceasing activity, disappearing for years at a time without being heard from. He made long stays in places so wild that it was impossible for him to communicate with anyone. He returned, always gentle and easy to get along with, obliging and generous beyond his means. Naturalists who had encountered him in his distant excursions, told of his kind deeds and extraordinary courage. However, as he never spoke of it himself, no one knew for sure if all this had really happened.

He lived for a long time without infirmities, but an extreme fatigue and the cold he experienced while studying the habits of the eider-duck in Lapland made him lame as he had been in his childhood. Accustomed to a great amount of exercise and not now being able to give himself up to it, he thought he did not have many years to live. He oc-

cupied himself, sending to various museums the birds of his collection together with unsigned notes which the learned valued greatly without knowing where they came from.

As much as most of the others loved to put themselves forward and to make themselves talked about, Clopinet loved to hide his identity. He could not, however, prevent himself from being loved and respected by the country people, who called him "my lord." They would have jumped into the sea if it gave him any pleasure. He was accordingly very happy, spent his last leisure times making excellent sketches which were sold at a high price and much admired after his death. When he knew he was close to the end, enfeebled and as if forewarned, he wanted to see the great cliff again. He wasn't very old, and his family had no real fear for him. His faithful friends, the apothecary and the priest, were much older than he, but they were still robust, and offered to go with him. He thanked them, begging them to let him go alone. He promised not to go far along the strand. His fondness for solitude was well known and no one wanted to trouble him.

When night came, as he did not return, his brothers, his nephews and his friends became anxious. They went out with torches, the priest and the apothecary following François as best they could. They hunted all night, they explored the beach all the next day, and made inquiries all the succeeding days. The dunes were mute, the sea did not cast up his body. An old woman, who was fishing for shrimps on the strand at sunrise, asserted she had seen a great sea-bird pass, whose like she had never seen before. Almost brushing her cap, this strange bird had called to her with the voice of my lord the baron: "Goodby, good people! don't be at all troubled about me; I've found my wings again."

Queen Coax



TO MADEMOISELLE

AURORE SAND

Since you can now read, my dear, I am writing out the stories I tell you. I want to instruct you a very little bit while amusing you as much as possible. Thus you will learn about words and things new to you. I am publishing one of these stories so that other children can also profit by it. Their parents will not take it at all amiss.

Queen Coax

THERE was in a great old castle in Normandy or in Picardy, I forget which, a stately old lady possessing much land, who was very good-natured and very sensible in spite of her great age. Around the castle were great moats or ditches filled with rushes, water-lilies, galin-gales, and a thousand other very beautiful plants which came up of themselves. There a multitude of frogs lived, some so old and so big that one was astonished by their fine figures and their powerful voices. The chatelaine, who was named Dame Yolande, was so used to their uproar that she slept just as well in spite of it, and no one in her household was at all inconvenienced.

But there came a great drought. Water was lacking in the moats, and the reeds and other plants perished. Many frogs, salamanders, water-lizards and other little creatures who lived amid these plants died and caused the mud to become poisoned, giving off a vile odor like a marsh, and spreading the fever in the castle and the country round-about. This fever was very severe. Many people died of it, and Madame Yolande, as well as almost all those who lived with her, fell sick.

Madame Yolande had children living in other parts of the country; there only remained near her one of her grand-daughters whose name was Marguerite. She was a child of fifteen, very sensible, very courageous and very helpful, who made herself loved by every one, although she was not at all pretty. She was very small, very quick of body and quite graceful; but her nose was too short, her eyes too

round, her mouth too big. Madame Yolande, who had been beautiful in her day, said sometimes: "What a pity that a child so sweet-tempered and so intelligent should have the face of a little frog!"

Was it because of this likeness that Marguerite loved the frogs and pitied them when she saw them dying of hunger and thirst in the dried-up moats? In spite of her pity for these harmless creatures she had an idea one day. It was that, if the moats were entirely dried up and cultivated as a garden, there would be fine fruits shielded from the frost. The soil, made wholesome, would no longer give off bad air and fevers to the people of the castle and the country round-about. She took such good care of her grandmother and the old servants that she succeeded in curing them. When winter was come, she said to Madame Yolande, to whom she had already spoken of her plan: "Grandmother, here are the moats entirely without water; the frost has destroyed all the living things and all the plants. Let's not wait until early spring, the rainy season, which will make all this swamp sprout up again and revive. Let's send for the laborers, have all the waste carried away, and deepen the little ditches through which the water flows out. We'll have good soil brought in, sand the walks, sow and plant, and next year we'll have no more sickness."

"Do as you please, Margot," answered Madame Yolande. "You are a girl of good judgment. I give you permission to direct all the workmen."

Mademoiselle Margot hastened to arrange everything. At the end of fifteen days, the great moats were cleaned. The dried and decayed weeds were burned, beautiful flowerbeds were laid out, fine paths were sanded, and in the month of March fruit-trees were planted on trellises along

the walls. There were costly shrubs in the beds, and flowers in the borders. In the month of May all was foliage and flowers in what had been very unhealthy and dangerous moats. The reservoirs were deepened and lined with marble. In them the rainwater was collected, and remained beautiful and clear. There were tiny fish, red as fire, and great swans, white as snow. Marguerite had ordered pretty green huts built, where she housed her swans and her peacocks. The goldfinches and the chaffinches came to make their nests in the trees. She was so happy in her new gardens, well shielded from extreme heat and extreme cold, that she spent all her time there. Madame Yolande descended into them from time to time by a staircase which her granddaughter had had made very easy on her account.

One day Marguerite inquired of Madame Yolande if she was pleased with the change, for it was summer again and no one was sick: "Certainly, I am satisfied with your work," answered the old lady, "and I recognize that you have rendered us a great service. However, I must admit one thing. It is that in spite of myself I regret, not the vile marsh from which you have delivered us, but the days of my youth when the water was abundant and clear. I don't know anything so beautiful as a lordly residence surrounded by its moats brimming full. Now, our castle has the air of a middle-class dwelling. I am sure the ladies of the country roundabout are making fun of us and asking each other, when they see your plantation, if we are gardeners and count on sending our apples to market."

Marguerite was so mortified by the words of her grandmother that she hung her head blushing. Madame Yolande kissed her on the forehead saying to console her: "The thing is done now and it's brought good results. One must know

how to prefer the useful to the agreeable. We'll eat our apples and let people chatter. Go on taking care of your garden, and be sure that I approve of you."

Marguerite, left alone, grew quite pensive. She had never seen the moats full and clear. Perhaps they had never been so beautiful as her grandmother thought, but Marguerite remembered having seen them all green with water-lentils, like a silken carpet finely figured with tall clusters of enormous reeds. She remembered the water-gladioli with their great bouquets of little white and reddish brown roses, the water buttercups with their thousand flowerets of dull silver, the sky-blue water veronicas. She remembered all those tiny miracles of fountain moss out of which she had wound nests in her play, the long hart's-tongues of which she had made girdles, the elegant ferns she had fashioned into aigrettes. Then she was conscious of a strange regret and found her fine garden sad and ugly.

"I've destroyed," she said to herself, "a thing which pleased me and which my grandmother misses, a thing which had been beautiful, and might perhaps have become so again this year with the autumn rains." She regarded her marble pools, her red fish and her noble swans, and began to cry, convinced that they weren't as fine as the big frogs, the salamanders, the water-lizards, and the thousand little animals which formerly frolicked in the moss and in the mud. She fixed her tearful eyes on the clear water which stole away to carry off, through a very neat trench, the overflow of the basins. Without thinking where she went she followed the little rippling stream, which became unconfined amid the open fields.

It was a pretty brook which lost itself in the wide meadow. Marguerite walked through the wet grass towards

the river into which the brook stole noiselessly. She came to a place where the unconfined flow of the brook had formed on the bank of the river a marsh, not there before. The river was not large. Trees blown down by storms obstructed its course at this point, and the water which came from the prairie could go no farther. There the tall reeds which formerly reared themselves in the moats had desperately pushed back the water-gladioli, the irises, the white buttercups and the blue veronicas. Around all these plants swarms of insects gave themselves over to their games. The coral-red dragon-flies pursued one another amid the ferns. There swarmed a company of beetles arrayed in golden bronze, a land-people who seem to have borrowed their brightness from the metals, as an air-people, the butterflies, have borrowed theirs from the flowers.

Marguerite searched in vain for the frogs; she saw almost everything in the water excepting a frog, big or little. "Can it be that there isn't a single frog left on earth?" she asked herself. "And am I the cause of the disappearance of these poor creatures?"

The sun had plunged into a great violet-colored cloud which crept along the horizon. All of a sudden it freed itself and cast on the prairie a red beam so bright that Marguerite was forced to close her eyes an instant. When she opened them again, she found herself, not on the edge of the marsh, but in the very middle, on an islet formed by branches and roots. There was water all about her, water which looked deep and clear and in which skipped thousands of sparks. She did not ask herself how she had reached there without getting wet, and how she was to get out without plunging in. The sun's rays were so beautiful that everything seemed very fine in the marsh; the water was like melted gold, the

reeds resembled palm-trees covered with emerald and ruby fruit. From an old willow which hung low over the bank fell a shower of azure-hued insects who were hurrying to suck the honey from lilac-colored flowers.

Then Marguerite heard a faint and indistinct song beneath the water which soon rose into the grasses. Gradually the strange little words grew louder, and became clear. Marguerite heard her name repeated a thousand times by millions of little voices: "Margot, Margot, Margot, Margot, Margot!" She could not keep from answering: "What is it? What do you wish of me?"

At that the little creatures, lizards, salamanders, water-spiders, dragon-flies, began to talk all together without ceasing to frisk about, sliding, diving, flying, dancing madly, and repeating: "Margot, Margot," up and down the scale, until Marguerite was deafened by it. "Come, come," she said, stopping her ears, "if you wish to talk, speak one at a time and make it clear what you're asking me."

Then there was a great silence. All the creatures were still, the sun veiled itself anew, and the reeds separated as if to let some one through. Suddenly, opposite her Marguerite saw a superb green frog, speckled with black, but so large, so very large, that she had never seen its like, and was afraid of it.

"Don't be afraid, if you mean well," said the frog in a voice which resounded like a battle-dore, "you should know, if you are a little lady quite important on the land, that I am in the ponds and in the grasses, a powerful queen, Queen Coax! I know you very well. I lived for a long time under your window, in the moats of your old manor-house. Then, I ruled a great people whose mother I was, and we loved you because you loved us. We had noted that you looked

like us, and we thought of you as one of our sisters. You came each day to see us. Our graceful movements charmed you, at the same time that our sweet voices entertained you. You never harmed us; therefore, I have not blamed you at all for the misfortunes of my people. The drought destroyed them, alas! Alone I survived the disaster, alone I followed the few drops of water which ran out across the meadow. I have established myself here, until a new marriage enables me to have another family. Mark well now my words. Never think of draining my new empire as you did the moats of your residence. Know that, if you do as much for this meadow, great misfortunes will come to you, as well as to your family."

"You are jesting, madame," replied Margot. "It is clear to me that you are a fairy, and you should know that I never intended to distress you. Nay, if it rests with me to do you some service, I am quite disposed to render it, for I perceive your sorrow, and I'm very good-hearted."

"Well then, my noble child," said the frog, "I am going to open my heart and confide to you my anxieties. Follow me into my crystal palace, and you shall hear of marvelous things new to human ears."

So saying, Queen Coax plunged to the furthestmost depths of the pond. Marguerite found herself prevailed upon to the point of following, when she felt herself seized by the hem of her skirt. Turning around, she saw the noble Névé, the largest and the tamest of her swans. He was her favorite and wore a gold collar. Immediately the spell which the frog had cast over her passed away. Marguerite was alarmed to find herself in the middle of the pond, at the dead of night, for the sun had set. The sky was overcast with thick clouds, and she no longer knew where to set

foot to get out of the marsh. "Oh! my dear Névé," she said to the swan, caressing him, "how did you manage to find me here, and how am I going to get out?"

The swan again took hold of the hem of her skirt, and began to tug at it with all his strength. She followed him, risking all, and felt sand and stones beneath her feet. She could now walk from the marsh. Hardly was she out when she lost sight of the swan. She called in vain; all was quiet, and the night constantly became darker.

"Could I have dreamed it?" she said to herself, "or has Névé gone on ahead to the castle?"

She made up her mind to return there at once. As soon as she had presented herself to her grandmother, she went to see if Névé had returned. She did not find him in the garden, or in the court of the castle, and she became very anxious. Marguerite reassured her grandmother saying that she had lost track of the time dreaming on the bank of the river. She did not dare to tell the strange things which had happened to her. She feared she would be laughed at, the more so because she was not quite sure that she hadn't seen and heard these things in a dream. The only thing certain was that her beautiful swan had disappeared. When everyone had gone to bed, she opened her window, looking in all directions and whistling softly to call him. Finally, seeing and hearing nothing save the storm which rumbled, and the wind which made the weathercocks grate, she went to bed, very troubled and tired.

Then she heard a voice sweet as distant music passing by in the storm-wind, which said to her: "Don't be afraid; I'm watching over you. But don't trust Queen Coax. A prudent girl shouldn't talk with frogs she isn't acquainted with."

When she woke up, she was sure she had imagined the adventures of the day before, for having gone down to the moats, the first creature she saw was the noble swan swimming on one of the pools. She called him, gave him some bread and caressed him a thousand times. He ate the bread with his usual greediness and received the caresses with his usual indifference. Even if he was beautiful and quite tame, he was not on that account more intelligent than other swans. Marguerite tried to talk to him, but he paid no attention to her. When he wasn't hungry any longer, he went away to make himself smart in the sunlight, to smooth his feathers, and scratch his breast. After that, he fell asleep standing on one foot without thinking about anything at all.

Then Marguerite, seeking the cause for her dreams, remembered that when she was very little she had enjoyed hearing the tales her grandmother told her to put her to sleep. In one of these tales there was a frog-fairy who did marvelous things. She tried to remember it all but could not. "It's this story," she told herself, "which has run through my head. In order to think no more about it, I'm going to ask my grandmother to tell it to me so that I can laugh at it with her."

She went to find Madame Yolande in the drawing-room, but she forgot the frogs and the fairies when she saw close by her grandmother's chair a person whose appearance and dress dazzled her. It was a tall young man, pink and white, curled and powdered in the fashion of the time, in a handsome officer's uniform, sky-blue all laced with silver. He arose, and, walking with much grace, as if he intended to dance the minuet, came to meet Marguerite. He kissed her hand, and said to her in a little piping voice: "Is it you, indeed, my dear cousin Marguerite? I am happy

to make your acquaintance again. You have grown, but your face has not changed at all."

Marguerite reddened, for she took that for a compliment and did not know what to say. She did not recognize the young man who was calling her cousin. "Dear child," said Madame Yolande, "then you don't remember at all your cousin, Mélidor de Puypercé? It is true that you were quite little when he went away with the rank merely of officer. Now that he is twenty years old, his parents have given him a regiment, and you behold a colonel of dragoons. Embrace one another, children, and be good friends as before."

Marguerite then remembered this cousin whom she had never been able to like, because he was of a teasing disposition and an idler. However, as she was without ill-feeling, she offered her cheek to him, which he touched with the tip of his lips so mockingly it embarrassed her. She thought that he was ungrateful, or that he remembered no longer all the mischievous tricks which she had forgiven.

However, he went on talking, and she listened to him in open-mouthed wonder. He told of the wonders of Paris, the plays, the fêtes and the balls at which he had distinguished himself. He talked of the fashions, and seemed so up-to-date and such a good judge of women's dress, that Marguerite was quite ashamed of her little print frock with its red flowers, and of the tiny green ribbon which held back her beautiful hair. Monsieur de Puypercé paid no attention to the vexation he caused her, and Madame Yolande did not seem to find her grandnephew nearly so silly as he really was. She smiled at his nonsense, as if she took pleasure in remembering the time when she made a great figure in the world. Dinner was served and Puypercé found every-

thing very ordinary, even the pastry Marguerite made so well that the guests of the household always praised it. He quite scorned the delicious cider of the region, and did not hesitate to demand some wine of Champagne, which his great-aunt ordered served to him. He then declared this very flat, and yet drank more of it than was necessary to cause him to talk nonsense.

Madame Yolande finally observed his ill-manners and said to him: "My dear child, go lie down. Tomorrow you'll perhaps know what you're saying. I like to think that you have been taught politeness, and that when you are in your right mind, you wouldn't belittle in such an impertinent fashion the things which are offered you heartily."

Marguerite was glad for the lesson he had received, and went to sleep without thinking of him. However, there is always a little vanity in the depth of the most sensible heart. When she got up the next day, she reproached her maid for always bringing her the ugliest dresses in her clothespress, for she had some quite handsome ones she never wore.

The maid then brought her a dress of very rich yellow silk, trimmed with flame-colored ribbons, a gift from Madame Yolande. Madame Yolande was neither poor nor close with money, but she had lived for so many years in the country that she no longer knew anything at all about dress. Marguerite did not usually take any interest in it, preferring short skirts and strong cloth suitable for gardening. The poor child, when she tried to make herself handsome, had the air of a little old lady arrayed in Sunday best. It gave Puypercé a fine chance to make fun of her. However, he didn't do it at all. He had profited by Madame Yolande's lesson, and Marguerite was surprised to find him very good-

natured and polite. She was satisfied with the excuses he made for his headache of the evening before which, he said, had made him cross. In short, he talked to her in a way to make her forget all that had displeased her, and in her turn she desired to be agreeable to him. After breakfast, she suggested that they visit the new gardens. She conducted him there, and was pleased to see him interested. He asked about all the arrangements and no longer made fun of anything. He looked at the red fish, and asked her if they were good to eat. He admired the water-buttercups, which he called tulips, and enjoyed watching the swans swim about, saying that in the hunt they would make a good target.

One thing alone disquieted Marguerite. Névé, as if he had heard Puypercé's words, flew into a violent rage and pursued him with mighty blows of wing and beak. She feared that, thus attacked, the colonel of dragoons would make a defense in which the poor swan would be worsted. Nothing of the sort! The fine colonel took refuge, first, in his cousin's direction. Then, seeing that he could not take a step without Névé's setting on him to nip the calves of his legs, took flight and stationed himself, quite pale, behind the garden-gate. This he took pains to close between the swan and himself. Marguerite had difficulty in driving back the enraged bird and rejoining her cousin, whose fright surprised her very much. He excused himself by telling her he feared he would fly into a passion and kill, defending himself, a creature which she loved.

She was disposed to pardon everything and conducted him into the fields, where she showed him the tall, noble trees which surrounded the castle. "And how much are they worth?" Monsieur de Puypercé asked her.

"Truly, I don't know," answered Marguerite. "They're not for sale."

"But when they are yours? Your grandmother told me this morning she intended to give you, after her death, all that she owned in this part of the country."

"She's never spoken of that, and I beg of you, Mélidor, don't talk to me of the death of my grandmother."

"You must, however, make up your mind to it. She's very old, and she wishes to find you a husband before she dies."

"I don't want to be married!" cried Marguerite. "I don't want to risk having to leave my grandmother, who has raised me. I love her more than any one else on earth."

"It's very fine to feel that way, but my Aunt Yolande will soon die. You'll not be sorry to find a handsome husband who will make you rich by selling all these fields and this ugly old castle where you live as if buried alive. Then, my dear Marguerite, you'll wear magnificent dresses, of the latest style. You'll go to court. You'll have a fine coach, stately lackeys, diamonds, a box at the Opera, a mansion in Paris; all that can render a woman happy."

At first Marguerite was very much troubled to hear her cousin talk in this fashion. While he wandered about with her through the woods, the fields and prairies, he returned so often to the idea that she would be very rich and soon married to her liking, that Marguerite commenced to think about it. She was surprised that she had never considered it before.

They came to the edge of the marsh, and all of a sudden Puypercé cried: "Oh! what a fine frog that is! I've never seen one so big! They're good to eat, frogs; I'll kill it."

And as the frog was asleep in the sun and not on its guard, he lifted his cane.

"Stop, cousin," cried Marguerite seizing his arm, "don't harm that creature. You'd make me feel very badly."

"Why so?" replied her cousin quite astonished, and he turned towards her, regarding her in a strange fashion.

This glance disturbed Marguerite. Not knowing what she was saying and remembering the vision she had had in this place, she gently shoved the frog with the tip of her umbrella saying: "Wake up, madame, and save yourself."

The frog plunged to the depths of the pond, and the colonel was convulsed with laughter. "What are you laughing at so?" said Marguerite. "I can't endure cruelty to animals. . . ."

"To frogs particularly!" replied Puypercé, laughing so hard his eyes were red. "You protect frogs, you speak to them politely, you are at your best with them!"

"And if that's so," said Marguerite, offended, "what's so funny about it?"

"Nothing," answered Puypercé, becoming serious all at once. "When a frog has wit and grace. . . . A person can get used to anything, and as much to this creature here as to another. I promise you, cousin, to do no harm to your friends. Let us speak of something else, and be assured I'm not joking. You're an agreeable person, and if you saw the world you'd be much improved."

"It must be very beautiful, this world," thought Marguerite returning to the manor-house on the colonel's arm. She longed to know about it, and, when evening was come, she could not keep from asking Madame Yolande why she never left the country any more.



STOP, DON'T HARM THAT CREATURE!

"Oh, oh, Marguerite," answered the good lady, "so you're tired of being a country girl? Be patient, my child. I'm very old, and you'll not have to wait long before you're free to live where you please."

Marguerite burst into tears, and, throwing herself on her grandmother's neck, she could not utter a word. Madame Yolande perceived clearly the good heart and strong affection of her granddaughter. She then turned towards Puypercé and said: "You're mistaken, my boy. Margot isn't tired of living here with me and doesn't wish to leave me. You may go back to your regiment or to your pleasures."

"Since you dismiss me, my dear aunt," he answered, "I have the honor to bid you adieu. I'll leave tomorrow very early. Good-bye, Marguerite. You'll think it over." And he withdrew bowing gracefully.

"Grandmother, what does this mean?" cried Marguerite as soon as he was gone.

"It means, my child, that, if you wish to marry your cousin, Puypercé, you've only to say the word."

"What, he came to ask me in marriage?"

"No, he didn't plan it; he conceived the idea this morning."

"But why?"

"Perhaps he's found you pretty," said Madame Yolande smiling.

"Grandmother, don't make fun of me! I'm not pretty, and I know it very well. I'm only a little frog, and you've often told me so."

"But that hasn't kept me from loving you. One may be a little frog and yet inspire affection."

"My cousin love me! No, he's known me too short a time. Tell me the truth, grandmother. He can't love me."

"It's your part to tell me what I ought to think. You walked together all afternoon. I wasn't there. He must have told you a great deal about fine things. Didn't you tell him that you would be glad to marry so as to be a fine lady and see the world?"

"No, grandmother, he's told a story; I never said any such thing."

"But didn't you think it? He's so sly; he must have guessed it."

Marguerite could not lie; she felt ashamed and did not answer. Madame Yolande was keen witted and understood. "Listen, dear child," she said, "you have given me happiness and care in my old age; I must endeavor to render your youth happy and bright. I'll make you rich, and your cousin knows it. I don't want to speak either favorably or unfavorably of him. You've a good deal of intelligence and sense. You must decide about him and as he said, you must think it over. Go to bed, and if tomorrow morning you want him to stay, you've only to let him know it."

Marguerite was so excited by surprise and anxiety that she did not even think of going to bed. She did not feel any affection for her cousin, but did he perhaps care for her? She knew she was agreeable and not at all stupid. Puypercé had at first seemed to her silly and disagreeable. However, if, forgetting her homeliness, this handsome youth had appreciated her good understanding, then he apparently had some sense after all. He had faults; he was frivolous, loved free spending and good cheer, but he perhaps had a good heart. He had given in to her on perceiving that she protected animals, and he did not seem at all stubborn. "I'm so ugly," she said to herself, "I'll perhaps never please any one else, or it will be a young man as homely as I.

Everyone will say: 'She can't find a better.' Is it wrong to bolster up one's self-esteem walking out on the arm of a handsome husband? To hear it said: 'Margot has a face like a frog, but she has all the same been pleasing to this fine gentleman, to this colonel so well powdered, so well dressed, who could choose from among the most beautiful?' I don't wish to leave my grandmother. But if he loves me, he will consent to leave me near her, and he'll come to see us often. Since she leaves me free to decide, it's up to me to make up my mind before tomorrow morning. If I let him go away, he'll be angry and will never return any more. If I write him a letter, that will be given him as soon as it's morning. But I don't dare. Why was he so afraid of my swan, and why was the swan so enraged with him? He's very queer, my cousin; why did he laugh so much when I said to the frog. . . .?"

Marguerite was tired and went to sleep in her chair. She stood up to keep awake. All of a sudden she found herself, without knowing how she got there, in the moats, on the edge of one of the marble basins which the moon shone on. She was surprised to see that tall reeds had shot up all about, even in the water, and as she sat down quite weary and sleepy on a grassy bank, Queen Coax hopped close to her and spoke to her as follows: "Margot, you're a kind person, you've saved my life. I want to give you good advice; that's why I left my palace on the prairie to come and find you in your moats, which I know perfectly. You must marry your cousin, my dear; it would mean happiness and honor for you."

"You aren't angry with him for the blow with his cane he was about to give you?"

"He didn't know who I was; he took me for an ordinary

frog. That has made me think that it would be wise for me to wear my crown and my jewels. I intend to array myself this evening as befits my rank."

"Your crown and your jewels?" said Marguerite astonished. "Where are they?"

"I'm here to ask you for them, Margot, for they're in your house."

"How can that be?"

"You shall hear my story, which I was going to tell you the other day when your horrid swan, that bird of ill-omen whom you call Névé, and who is no other than Prince Rolando, prevented it. Listen to him! He stirs in his hut; he longs to devour me. But I made sure he was securely locked in; moreover, I know magic words to frighten him. Now listen to me, and profit by what I'm going to reveal to you.

"I am one of your ancestresses, not direct, however. I am the great-great-grandmother of the great-great-grandmother of your aunt, Madame de Puypercé, mother of your cousin, the colonel. That is why I am interested in him and in you. I have at present the honor to be a fairy. But I was a mortal like you, and I was born in this castle. I was called Ranaïde. I was as beautiful as the sunshine, as beautiful as a woman as I am today as a frog. My father, who studied magic, taught it to me. As I was very bright, I became so skillful that I made use of the most extraordinary mysteries, among others, that of transformations. I could take on any outward form, and reassume my own by means of certain preparations and charms. By this means I knew all that was said and done on the land and in the waters. But I hid my powers carefully, for I would have been denounced, pursued and burned as a sorceress in those days of ignorance and superstition.

"I was twenty years old when Prince Rolando took me in marriage. He was young, rich, agreeable and handsome. I loved him passionately, and I soon had several children. We were the happiest people in the world, residing in this castle then splendid and visited by all the nobility of the country, when I believed I had cause for jealousy against one of my gentlewomen, named Mélasie. I had noticed that she roamed about the moats in the evening in company with a man enveloped in a cloak. I imagined this man was my husband, and I transformed myself into a frog to see them close by or to recognize them by the sound of their voices. I stationed myself between two stones on the parapet of the moat, and the man passed quite close to me. I then perceived that I had been mistaken. The unknown was one of my husband's pages, who pled for her love in his own behalf. I was so overjoyed that I reascended hurriedly to my bedroom. As it was very late, I threw myself on my bed and fell into a delicious slumber without remembering, alas, to take the potion which would give me back my natural form.

"At the hour when I was accustomed to be wakened Mélasie entered my room. Seeing an enormous frog stretched out on my bed, she was so afraid she could not say a word or even utter a cry. That was why I wasn't aroused.

"As soon as she was a little recovered she closed the door of my room noiselessly, and ran to awaken Prince Rolando to ask him where I was and inform him of the amazing creature she had found in my place. The prince hastened to my room, thinking the girl was mad. When he saw me thus, he was seized with horror and disgust, and could not imagine it was I. He drew his sword and struck me a blow which cut off one of my front feet. My enchantments saved me

from death. So long as I was concealed under a magic form, no destructive force could injure me for the space of two hundred years. Wounded, I bounced out onto the window-sill and from there into the moat, where my foot soon grew back again as whole as you see it now. From the moat I heard the uproar which set up in the castle as they tried to find the lost lady of the manor. They looked for me everywhere, and my husband was a prey to extreme grief. I awaited the night to enter the manor cautiously. Then I climbed, hopping from step to step, up to my room, and hastened to swallow the potion which would make me a woman and as beautiful as before. Alas, in vain did I add to the properties of the potion those of the most mysterious charms, and rub myself with the strongest ointments. This unhappy hand would not grow again, but remained a frog's foot. As my broken-hearted husband approached my room, declaring that he wished to die of grief there, I only had the time to envelop half of my body in my velvet cloak to hide that miserable foot.

"On finding me again my husband almost died of joy. He took me in his arms shedding tears and overwhelming me with questions. He supposed a wicked demon had carried me away from his love, and he wished to know how I had managed to return to him. I was forced to invent a story and to shun his embraces, for fear of letting him see my foot. I thought with anguish that it would be useless to try to hide my secret from him, and that soon he would discover the sad truth. I must take an extreme, a frightful course of action, that of causing the one to disappear whom I loved better than my life."

Marguerite, terrified, longed to get up and escape far



MY ENCHANTMENTS SAVED ME FROM DEATH

away from the horrid Ranaïde, but she felt herself held as by a spell. The frog began her story again in these words:

"You should know, my poor child, that it didn't rest with me to act in a different fashion. An oath which it is impossible to break obliges those who receive magic gifts to destroy those who have found it out. My husband was doomed, the moment he saw my foot, to be carried away by the spirits, my lords and masters, into unfathomable depths.

"I resolved to remove him from their power by causing him to disappear before he had discovered anything. To this end I put a drug into his wine which forthwith made white plumes and great wings put forth on his body. In less than a quarter of an hour, he became a beautiful swan white as snow. He could not become a man again, but during two hundred years would escape death and the power of the spirits.

"You should know that the two hundred years are ended tonight at the break of day. It depends on you whether I recover my youth, my beauty and my rank as a human being in the scale of creation."

"That's good," said Marguerite, "for doubtless you can then do Névé, Prince Rolando I mean, the same service I'll have rendered you?"

"Surely," answered Ranaïde, "that's what I have vowed to do."

"In that case I'm ready; tell me what you want."

"In order to understand, you must know the rest of my story. Hardly had Prince Rolando seen himself changed into a bird, than he became frightfully enraged and tried to kill me. Had he kept enough human intelligence to perceive the disaster into which I was forced to involve him? Did he merely obey an instinct of his new race? He only thought to devour me. I vainly endeavored to make him understand

our common plight. He would listen to nothing, and I was forced to pronounce the magic words which, during two hundred years, must render us strangers the one to the other. He flew away into the air with loud outcries. I did not see him again until yesterday, when he came to hunt you on the edge of the marsh where I have been forced lately to make my residence."

"But why, madame," said Marguerite, "have you been condemned to remain a frog during two hundred years, when it rested with you to be a lady and to hide your foot from curious eyes?"

"The cruel spirits wished it, my little Marguerite! Offended by the means I took to protect my husband from them, they condemned me to abandon my children and to marry Coax, king of the frogs, with whom I reigned for a long time over the moats, and whose widow I now am. The castle passed in course of time to your grandmother, and all the drugs which I had so carefully prepared have disappeared or lost their power. But there exists at your house a great treasure which can and must restore to me all my beauty. It is an enchanted set of jewels, my wedding-gift, which is in a cedar-wood casket. Madame Yolande keeps it locked up in her room, as the most rare and precious of your family riches. This casket belongs to you, since your grandmother intends to give you all she possesses. Go try to find it and bring it here to me!"

"No, madame," answered Marguerite, "I don't want to steal what now belongs to my grandmother, and unless she consents to it . . ."

"It isn't a question of robbing her," cried Ranaïde, "I'm not anxious to recover my jewels. I only wish to adorn myself with them for an instant, and as soon as I'm trans-

formed, I'll not want them. I'll give them back to you, for you have great need of them for yourself. There's one thing which should persuade you. It is that these magic jewels have the power to give beauty to the homeliest. When you've worn them for but one hour, in place of resembling the frog I am, you'll be like what I was, what I'm to become again; that is to say, the most beautiful among women."

Marguerite was persuaded, and ran to hunt the casket. At the moment that she took hold of it in her grandmother's safe, it seemed to her that Madame Yolande woke up and looked at her. She went to kneel close to the bed, ready to confess all. But Madame Yolande turned towards the wall without seeming to have perceived her. Time pressed; the sky was lightening a little as if day was about to break. Marguerite rushed out and instantly found herself close to the pool where Queen Coax awaited her. "Oh, dear me," she cried, holding out the casket, "there is no key, and I don't know where the secret spring is to open it."

"I know," answered the frog, hopping with joy. "It merely requires that lips which have never told a lie should say: *Casket, open-thou!*"

"Well, say it, madame."

"I can't, my child, I was forced to fib of old to hide the secrets of my knowledge. You're the one who must say it, and we'll see if your tongue is, as I believe, free from all untruth."

"Casket, open-thou!" said Marguerite with confidence, and the casket opened. From it issued a ruddy flame, which the frog did not seem to notice. She plunged in her feet and drew out a little mirror framed in gold; then a necklace of glistening emeralds with an antique mounting, matched earrings, a fillet and a girdle of large pearls of the first water

with emerald clasps. She arrayed herself in this richness and regarded herself in the mirror, a silly smile on her face.

Marguerite looked on anxiously, fearing that Queen Coax might disappear with Madame Yolande's jewels; but Coax was not thinking of flight. Drunk with pleasure and with self-conceit, she decked herself out and looked in the mirror with crazy motions and queer grimaces. Her round eyes shot fire and a greenish foam came from her mouth. Her body became bluish-green and livid, while her figure took on almost human size. "Margot, Margot," she exclaimed without remembering any longer to soften the tones of her voice, "look and admire. See how I grow taller, see how I'm changed, see how beautiful I'm becoming! Give me your cloak to make me a dress. Quick, quick, I must be dressed decently . . . but there's something still lacking . . . my plumed fan; where have you put it, naughty child? Oh, I have it! And my white gloves . . . quick now! My scented gloves! My necklace isn't clasped properly; do fasten it again, stupid! Oh heavens! I don't have my bridal bouquet. Isn't it in the casket? Look, turn it upside down . . . I have it! I'll put it at my girdle. I must dance; I've cramps in my legs. It's the transformation working. Yes, yes, dancing will relieve me more quickly! I feel the perfect grace of my movements returning, and the fire of eternal youth mounting to my brain! Haptcha! Here I am sneezing! Haptcha! Haptcha!"

Thus speaking, Queen Coax hopped and skipped in a crazy fashion. But, whatever she did, she remained a frog, and morning was breaking. She laughed, cried out, wept, beat the marble of the pool with her hind-feet, played with her fan, extended her forefeet like a ballet-dancer, drew herself up and rolled her eyes. All at once Marguerite, who

was regarding her fearfully, was so struck with the strangeness of her movements, that she was overcome by a fit of laughter and let herself down on the grass. Then the frog flew into a terrible rage. "Keep still, little villain, or I'll punish you as you deserve."

"Oh dear! Madame, forgive me," said Marguerite, "it got the better of me. You're so funny! See, I have to laugh or I'll die."

"I can't bring about your death, more's the pity," cried Ranaïde springing at her and passing one of her cold and slimy feet over Marguerite's face. "But you shall suffer for the distress I endure. I wished to spare you; you make me merciless. I must put an end to it! I suffer too much! Take my ugliness and let it be added to yours, since by putting you in my place I'll be more quickly freed! Here, take the mirror. Laugh now, if you still want to laugh!"

Marguerite took the mirror which the fairy held out to her and uttered a cry of horror when she saw herself without hair, her face green and her eyes quite round. "Frog! Frog!" she cried despairingly. "I'm becoming a frog; I am a frog! It's all over!" And, flinging down the mirror, she gave a hop and plunged into the pool.

She remained there at first as if asleep and unable to think clearly. Little by little she recovered when she saw the sun peeping over the horizon and casting out, as it were, a great sheet of fire which gilded the tips of the reeds above her head. She then risked coming to the surface of the water. There she saw an extraordinary sight: the unfortunate Coax, laid out on the bank, her feet in the air, her body stiffened by death. She had a hideous human head with long green hair like sea-weed. The rest of her body, as large as that of an ordinary person, was dead white and all rough. She

retained the form of a frog. Close by her, Prince Rolando, clothed in a silver armor belted with gold, the helmet ornamented by a crest white as snow and bearing on his shoulders great swan-wings, took off the enchanted jewels with which Ranaïde had vainly adorned herself.

"Approach," he said to Marguerite, "and quickly put on these jewels which will give you back your own face. But do not try to become beautiful through the powers of magic. Remain intelligent and good, and never give yourself to anyone who will not love you as you really are. Adieu, the death of this guilty magician frees me forever from the bondages to which I was condemned two centuries ago. Do not pity her fate; she has lied to you. She wanted to bring about my death to hide her wicked secrets, and the spirits she called forth against me took up my defense. I am returning to them, but I shall watch over you, if you remain always worthy of my protection."

He spread his wings and mounted into the rays of the sun. Marguerite, on seeing him soar into the sky, thought she was regarding Névé with his collar of gold. Then it seemed to her that he was the morning-star. When she had lost sight of him, she looked for the dead body of the frog. In its place there was a hideous toadstool, black as ink, which at a puff of wind fell into dust.

She found herself in her room, seated on a chair, her eyes dazzled by the rising sun. Her first movement was to run to her mirror. For the first time in her life she found her ordinary countenance very pretty.

"All that, could it be a dream?" she said to herself. "And yet, here are the ancient jewels my grandmother guards so carefully. How does it come that I'm decked out in them? Could I have got them while dreaming?"

She took them off, put them back into the little box, and carried them to Madame Yolande's room before her grandmother awoke. Then she went down to the moat to see if Névé was in his hut, where she had found him once before after thinking him lost.

"You're looking for the swan?" asked the gardener. "He's gone. I saw him fly away at the break of day. He joined a passing flock of wild swans. I'd often said to Mademoiselle that the tip of his wing should be broken, but Mademoiselle didn't want it done. He's profited by it to escape; he's had the idea for a long time."

"Well, so much the better," said Marguerite, "for he's now happy and free. Since seeing him go, haven't you found anything new in the moat? Weren't there great reeds in it?"

"Reeds? Doubtless some always remain which spring up about the pools. But they are still quite small and I've my eye on them. This morning I pulled them all up carefully. I've put sand where they were, and I hope they'll not come up again this time."

Marguerite regarded the sand, and she seemed still to see the marks the great feet of the frog had left there while doing its crazy dance. But Marguerite knew these tracks were those of the peacocks who had just scratched in the freshly stirred earth.

At this moment, a noise of hoofbeats resounded above her head. She looked up and saw her cousin, Puypercé, escorted by his lackeys, pass over the drawbridge. She had completely forgotten him, and did not feel in a state of mind to mourn his departure. She had only to say the word to call him back. She hesitated an instant, shrugged her shoulders and then watched him depart.

As she went up again to the castle, she saw the servants

assembled on the flight of steps dividing the tips the colonel of dragoons had thrown them on leaving. She heard them grumbling; there was no more than a cent for each one. "After all," she said to herself, "perhaps he plans to return, or he may be quite poor and it's not his fault."

"Well," said Madame Yolande when Marguerite entered the room to bring her chocolate, "have you seen your cousin? Is he to remain with us?"

"I saw him leave, grandmother, and I said nothing to him."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I was quite disturbed by a dream I had, which I'll tell to you. But, as this dream or vision is perhaps something I'd remembered without knowing it, I want to ask you about the story of the frog-fairy you used to tell me to put me to sleep."

"I don't recall it very well," answered Madame Yolande, "the more so because it was a story I made up myself. Each time I told it differently. Let's see if I can remember . . . There was formerly in this castle a beautiful heiress named . . ."

"Ranaïde?" cried Marguerite.

"That's it," said her grandmother, "and she was a magician."

"She married the handsome prince . . . tell me the name of the prince, grandmother."

"Wait now . . . It was Prince Rolando."

"That's it, grandmother. I've dreamed the whole story over again, as if it had taken place under my eyes."

"But the end?"

"Oh, the end is terrible! The frog, wishing to assume her human countenance again . . ."

"Swelled up so much that she burst?"

"Precisely."

"Then your ending is what you remember of the fable I had you learn at the same time, for I never had to conclude my story. You were always asleep before the end."

At this moment a strong gust of wind blew dry leaves and straws into the room. Marguerite went to close the window. She saw on the sill a sheet of paper, covered with handwriting, and torn up as if it were the rough copy of a letter. On picking up this paper to throw it out, she saw her name written on it and brought it to her grandmother. Madame Yolande took it, examined it, and gave it back to Marguerite, saying: "It's the beginning of a letter from your cousin to his mother. It's been carried out by the wind from the room over mine which he occupied. Since we're in the mood to believe in spirits, I think we ought to thank the goblin who brought us this. Read it, my child; I give you permission."

"My dear mother, forgive me my follies; I am about to make up for them. I am resigned to making a rich marriage, for I have discovered that little Marguerite is bound to inherit all the property of the old aunt. The girl is hideous, a very frog, or rather a little green toad; with all that, quite a flirt and already mad about me. But when one is in debt as we are . . ."

The rough draft held nothing more but Marguerite thought this was quite sufficient. She was silent, but, as she saw that her grandmother was shocked and inclined to deal with her grandnephew as he deserved: "Let's not be at all upset, grandmother," Marguerite said, "and let's laugh about it. I'm not fond of my cousin, and you see that his self-conceit doesn't hurt me at all. You told me yesterday

evening to think it over. I don't know whether I reflected or slept, but in my dreams I saw things which remain as a lesson before my eyes."

"What did you see, my child?"

"I saw a frog array herself in emeralds, toy with her fan, dance the saraband, think herself beautiful, and die in the attempt to be so. She seemed to me so ridiculous that I laugh yet when I think of it. I don't want to act at all as she did. I also saw a beautiful swan fly away in the sunlight, and he said to me: 'Only marry one who will love you as you really are.' I want to do as he told me."

"And be sure that you'll be loved for yourself alone," answered Madame Yolande embracing Marguerite tenderly, "for there's something which can make one beautiful, and that's the happiness one deserves."

The Rosy Cloud





TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER

GABRIELLE SAND

My dear, having already dedicated a story to your older sister, I want to dedicate this one to you. You'll not be able to read it yourself until next year, but Aurore will forthwith tell it to you. However, next year, there will still be many words that you'll not understand. It's your sister who will explain them to you, for, if I write these tales to amuse you, I want them to teach you a little by making you look up a tiny part of the words and things you don't yet know.

When both of you understand everything without any one's aid, perhaps I'll not be about any more. Then remember the grandmother who adored you.

GEORGE SAND

Nohant, July 15, 1872.

The Rosy Cloud

I

CATHERINE had three ewes to tend. She wasn't able to read or write yet; but she could talk pretty well, and was a very good girl, just a little too curious and changeable, which last proves at least that she wasn't headstrong.

Not long after Christmas, her three ewes presented her with three lambs, two very sturdy and the third so tiny, so very tiny that one would have thought it a little rabbit. Catherine's mother, whose name was Sylvaine, didn't think very much of this poor lamb, and said it hadn't been worth while for it to come into the world at all. It couldn't be raised, or would stay so puny as not to be worth the grass it ate.

These words made Catherine feel badly, for she found this little creature prettier, more to her liking and suited to her size than the other two. She resolved to take great care of it, and gave it the name of Bichette.

Catherine looked after it so well that many times she was very near killing it with kindness. She loved Bichette too much; she caressed the lamb constantly, she carried it in her arms, she obliged it to go to sleep on her lap. Puppies and kittens love to be fussed over and let themselves be petted; but sheep, when they have been well fed, like better to be left alone, sleeping when they please; walking about or lying down where they please. Sylvaine told her

daughter that instead of letting Bichette grow, she was hindering growth by too much handling; but Catherine wasn't at all anxious for Bichette to grow; she would have liked the lamb still smaller so as to be able to carry it in her pocket. Every day in the morning Catherine led the mother-ewes to the meadow for two hours; in the afternoon for three hours. The two big lambs endured the absence of the ewes very reasonably; they had the air of knowing that their mothers were gone to the meadow in quest of milk. Bichette was less patient or more famished, and when the ewes returned the little lamb bleated so plaintively at her mother's approach, that Catherine was quite touched and almost cried about it herself.

She was forbidden to let the lambs out. They were too young; the grass was too cool; but she begged so for her Bichette that Sylvaine said: "Do as you wish then! If Bichette dies because of it, it won't be a great loss, and I'd even be just as glad to be rid of the lamb; it makes you foolish, and you don't take any interest in anything now except Bichette. You bring back the ewes too soon and you let them out too late, so as not to separate Bichette from her mother. Off with her then, come what may!"

Catherine carried Bichette away to the fields, and all the time she was there held the lamb under her apron to keep it warm. That went on for two days; but, the third, she began to play again and to run about as before. The lamb did not find itself the worse off for this, but was not any the better for it and continued to be a little immature thing.

One day when Catherine had thought more about hunting nests in the thickets than of looking after her animals,

she found towards evening a blackbird's nest with three half-grown young ones, already well feathered. They didn't seem at all shy, for when she held up the tip of one of her fingers, imitating the call of the hen-blackbird they opened their yellow beaks and exhibited their large and very pink throats.

Catherine was so pleased that she did nothing but talk to them and cuddle them while bringing in her sheep, and it wasn't until the next morning that she was aware of a great misfortune. Bichette was not in the sheepfold. The lamb had been left out; it had passed the night in the open air and without doubt had been eaten by the wolf. Catherine blamed the blackbirds who had made her hard-hearted and careless. All her affection for Bichette came back to her mind, and, crying bitterly, she ran to the meadow to find out what had become of the lamb.

It was then the month of March; the sun wasn't yet up; and over the pond, which was in the center of the meadow, there was a very thick white fog. Catherine, after having looked on all sides, vainly searching all the hollows and looking in all the hedges, drew near the pond, with the thought that poor Bichette had fallen in. She then saw something which astonished her greatly, for it was the first time in her life that she found herself there so early in the morning. The mist, which like a tablecloth had rested quietly on the water, was torn at the approach of the sun and rolled about in little balls trying to rise. Some had the air of being hung up on the branches of the willows and being held there. Others, beaten down and tossed by the morning breeze, fell again on the sand or seemed to shiver with cold on the wet grass. One moment Catherine thought she saw a flock of

white sheep; but it wasn't a lot of sheep she was hunting, it was Bichette, and Bichette wasn't there. Catherine began to cry again, laid her head on her knees, and threw her apron over her head, like a person in despair.

Happily, when one is a child, one can't cry forever. When she stood up again, she saw that all the little white balls had mounted over the trees and were disappearing into the sky in the form of pretty rose-colored clouds. These had the air of being attracted and borne away by the sun, as if it wanted to drink them up.

Catherine watched them for a long time crumbling and giving way, and when she lowered her glance, she saw on the bank, quite far away, for the pond was large, her Bichette quite motionless, either asleep or dead. Catherine hurried to the lamb, and without thinking that it might be dead, for children don't think much beforehand of the things which would give them too great sorrow, took it in her apron and began to run so as to get it home quickly. As she ran she was amazed to feel her apron so light one would have sworn there was nothing within. "How poor Bichette had suffered and wasted away in one night!" she said to herself. "It seems to me my apron is empty." She had it fastened around her and did not dare open it, for fear of chilling the little creature she wished to warm again.

All of a sudden, at the turn of the path she was following, she saw little Peter, the son of Joyeux, the maker of wooden shoes, who ran towards her, carrying in his arms, guess what? Bichette, very much alive and bleating finely. "Here," said little Peter, "here's your lamb I'm bringing back to you. Yesterday evening, it got mixed up with my animals when you were coming back home and showed me

your nest of blackbirds. You weren't willing to give me one of your little blackbirds, though I wanted it very much; but I'm better than you are. When I saw in my sheepcote that your lamb had followed one of my ewes, which it took for its mother, I let it have as much milk as it wanted and spend the night under shelter. I'm bringing it back to you this morning, thinking that you must be feeling badly, for you thought it quite lost, now didn't you?"

Catherine was so happy that she kissed little Peter and took him to her house to give him two of the little blackbirds. This made him so happy that he went away skipping like a kid.

When she had seen with what pleasure Bichette and its mother greeted one another again, Catherine finally thought to untie her apron. It wasn't till then that she remembered having gathered up in it something she took to be her lamb. What could this be? "I don't know anything about it," she said to herself, "but it isn't at all likely I picked up something that doesn't exist."

Fear seized her and curiosity also. She went out onto the roof of the sheepfold, which slanted, all moss-grown, down to the ground, and where a mass of tiny flowers sowed by the wind put forth. This roof was tiny, but very pretty and quite comfortable because it was of old thatch, completely exposed to the rising sun. More than once during the summer, Catherine had forgotten the hour for going to the meadow and had had a good nap to complete her whole night's sleep which was nevertheless always too short for her liking. She now went up to the top of this *tect*; the name in this region for a shelter for the flocks, and, with vast caution untied her apron. Now what could there be in this apron?

II

IT WAS an apron of blue cotton cloth, which had been cut out of one of Mother Sylvaine's old aprons, and it was neither new nor fine. If at this moment, however, Catherine had been asked to exchange it for a great deal of money, she would not have struck a bargain, so curious was she to see what was in it. She finally opened it, but saw nothing at all there. She shook the apron as hard as she could. Nothing fell out, but there formed about her something like white smoke, and in less than a minute there was a little cloud about her head. This cloud was round like a ball, and turned golden yellow the higher it mounted; then pale pink, but finally pink like the most beautiful of roses, after it had sailed beyond the top of the hazel-trees and the elders surrounding the sheepfold, on which shone the full light of the sun.

It didn't occur to Catherine to be very much surprised at having been able to pick up and carry away a cloud. She only thought of finding it pretty and of being sorry to see it fly away so quickly. "Oh, little ungrateful thing," she cried, "this is how you thank me for having returned you to the sky!"

Then she heard a very little voice coming out of the rosy cloud which chanted words, but what words!

III

CATHERINE did not understand a single syllable of it. She continued to look at the cloud which grew larger as it mounted, but finally it became very flimsy and was torn up

into a quantity of little rosy clouds. "Very well, then," cried Catherine, "see how you've foolishly gone ahead and let yourself be drunk up by the sun, just as he's swallowed all the clouds that were in the meadow! I'd have kept you in my apron; you were no trouble to me at all. Or I'd have put you in our garden, in the cool of the evening, under the big apple-tree, or in the washhouse, since you love to sleep on the water during the night. I've never taken care of a cloud, but I'd have learned, and have made you last, while now here you are carried away in bits by Mr. Wind or swallowed up by Mr. Sun."

Catherine listened to hear if the cloud would answer her. She heard then, in place of a single little voice, a multitude of voices, still more tiny, which sang like warblers, but without one being able to guess what they said. And, since these voices became ever more weak as they retreated, Catherine heard nothing more. She only saw the sky beautiful and clear, without a trace of any cloud. "Mamma," she said to her mother, who had called her to breakfast, "I'd like to know something."

"What thing, my child?"

"What the clouds say when they sing."

"The clouds don't sing, little simpleton; they grumble and they clash when the thunder is inside."

"Oh, dear me," cried Catherine, "I didn't think of that. . . . Let's hope that it doesn't get into my little rosy cloud!"

"What rosy cloud?" said Sylvaine, astonished.

"The one I had in my apron."

"Be still," said Sylvaine, "you know I don't like you to talk in a hit-or-miss way saying silly things that don't make

sense. It's all right for two-year-olds; but you're too big to play the dunce."

Catherine didn't dare say anything more, and went to the fields after breakfast. She only had one little blackbird left. She took it along and amused herself with it an hour or two, but, as she had got up very early, she fell asleep in the middle of the meadow. She wasn't afraid any longer of losing Bichette; she had left her with the other lambs in the sheepcote.

When she woke up she was lying flat on her back. She saw the sky, and, just over her head, her little cloud which had formed again high in the air. It was quite alone, absolutely alone in the blue of a perfect day, and shone like rosy silver.

"It's very pretty all the same," thought Catherine who was still half-asleep, "but how far away it is! If it's still singing, I can't hear it any more. I'd like to be where it is; I'd see all the earth and I'd travel over all the sky without being tired. If it wasn't ungrateful, it would have taken me up there; I'd have lain on it as if it were feathers, and now I'd be seeing the sun close up to it, and I'd know what it was made of."

The wrens in the thickets sang while Catherine's thoughts wandered at random. It seemed to her that these little birds were making fun of her and calling to her laughingly: "You're curious, shame on you, inquisitive girl!" Soon they were silent and drew back under the leaves, all trembling with fear. A great hawk was passing in the sky and circled about just beneath the rose-colored cloud. "Oh!" said Catherine again, "it's made no difference, their making fun of me and calling me curious. I'd still like to be on the back of that big bird of prey. I'd see my rosy cloud nearer by, and

perhaps I could fly to it." She aroused herself finally and remembered that one shouldn't say silly things, and therefore shouldn't think about foolish things. She took her distaff and spun her best, trying not to think of anything. But, in spite of herself, she constantly raised her head and regarded the sky. The hawk was about no longer, but the rosy cloud was still there.

"What are you looking up at all the time, little Catherine?" said a man who was passing through the meadow.

It was Father Bataille, come to cut down a dead tree in the nearby meadow and carrying home the branches on his shoulders. They were heavy, and he leaned against a willow to rest a moment.

"I'm looking at the cloud up there," replied Catherine, "and I'd like to know from you, who have traveled and are a scholar, why it's all alone and doesn't stir about at all."

"Oh that, my child," said the old man; "that's what, in the days I sailed the seas in a ship, I'd have called a squall, and for me it would have been a bad sign."

"Bad sign of what, Father Bataille?"

IV

"THE sign of a great tempest, my child. When you see that at sea, you say: 'There's going to be a storm, and a bad one!' It has the look of nothing at all. It's sometimes small and white like a sheep; you'd think you were going to carry it under your arm. And then it gets big and black and stretches all over the sky. Then, be about your business! Lightning, thunder, squalls and the devil to pay! You try hard not to be disabled, and you escape if you can!"

"Oh dear," said Catherine quite dismayed, "is my rosy cloud going to be wicked like that?"

"In our part of the country and at this time of year, squalls are very uncommon. In my opinion, they're no real danger on land; so it's all the same, but it's queer, your rosy cloud!"

"Why queer, Father Bataille?"

"Yes," answered the old sailor, "I think it has a strange look, and I want very much to hurry up and get my work done before evening. I've still three loads of branches to get in."

He set off again, and Catherine tried to busy herself with spinning; but she still kept looking up, and this wasn't the way to hasten her task and to round off her distaff. It seemed to her that her cloud got bigger and changed color. She was not mistaken; it became blue, then it grew slate-colored, then it became black, and little by little spread out until it would have filled all one side of the sky. Everything grew dark and gloomy, and finally the thunder began to rumble.

Catherine was glad at first to see her little cloud become so big, so important, and so powerful. "That's right," she said, "it's plain to me it isn't just a cloud like the others. The sun hasn't been able to drink it up, and you'd say it was the cloud which was about to devour the sun. And to think that this morning I held a cloud like that in my apron!" She was quite proud of it, but the lightning flashes darted as thick as could be from this terrible cloud. She was afraid, and hastened to drive in her ewes.

"I was worried about you," said her mother, "it's queer weather. I've never seen such a storm form so quickly and show itself so fierce at this season of the year."



"THAT, MY CHILD," SAID FATHER BATAILLE, "IS WHAT I'D HAVE
CALLED A SQUALL "

The storm was very terrible indeed. The hail broke the window-panes of the house, the wind blew the tiles from the roof, and a thunderbolt struck the big apple-tree in the garden. Catherine wasn't at all brave. She would have liked to hide herself under the bed, and she couldn't keep from saying out loud: "Wicked rosy cloud, if I'd known how mischievous you were, I wouldn't have put you in my apron!" Sylvaine began to scold her again, but the child couldn't keep from talking. "Alas, my child is crazy," said Sylvaine, to her neighbors. "Stuff and nonsense, it isn't anything," they answered, "it's the storm which has scared her out of her wits. She'll be all right tomorrow."

The next day, in reality, she was quite all right. The sun rose cheerfully. Catherine followed his example and got up on the thatch of the sheepfold just as he rose. The house was damaged, but the sheepfold, lower and better sheltered, had not suffered. The rain had beaten down a little the tiny flowers on the roof. The pretty yellow balsam, the white live-forevers, and the house-leeks lifted their heads, and seemed to say to the sun, turning their little faces in his direction: "Well, have you come back? Good morning, dear father, don't go away any more. We don't know which way to turn when you hide yourself."

Catherine wanted also to say good-day to Father Sun, but she was afraid she had made him angry by letting the cloud escape which had fought so hard with him the evening before. She did not dare ask her mother, who went into the garden beneath where she was perched, if one could vex and then appease the sun. Sylvaine didn't approve of these brown studies, and Catherine, who was quite obedient, resolved to have them no more.

She succeeded; her blackbird took all her time the fol-

lowing days, until it died from having eaten too much white cheese paste. Catherine felt very badly and took a sparrow to raise which was soon devoured by the cat. Another sorrow! She was sick of animals and wanted to go to school, and then she took a liking for her distaff. As she grew up she became a very lovable young girl and a very expert spinner.

V

WHEN she was twelve years old, her mother said to her: "Would you like to travel a little, my child, and see new parts of the country?"

"Surely," said Catherine, "I've always wanted to see the blue countries."

"What are you saying now, child? There are no blue countries!"

"Yes indeed there are. I see them every day from the roof of the sheepfold. All around our home, which is green, there's a great blue country."

"Oh, I know what you mean; it seems that way to you because it's far off. Well, you can satisfy your longing; your Great-aunt Colette, who lives a long way from here on the mountain and whom you do not know, because she hasn't come back to visit us for more than thirty years, wants to see us. There she is very old, and she's alone, never having married. She's not very rich, and you must be careful not to ask her for anything; on the contrary, we must offer her what she desires from us. I'm afraid she's having a bad time of it. Let's go find her, and, if she wants us to bring her back here, I'm ready to obey her, as it's my duty."

Catherine remembered having sometimes heard her rela-

tives talk among themselves of Aunt Colette. She had never understood very well what was said, and she did not try to find out anything more about it. The idea of seeing new sights made her blood stir. The wrens were right to call her curious. She had always been so, and there wasn't anything wrong in this; she loved to acquire knowledge.

So there she is off by coach with her mother. They traveled during a day and a night and arrived all of a sudden at the mountain. Sylvaine thought that very bad, and Catherine dared not say that she thought it very fine.

When they got down from the coach and asked the way to the village where Madame Colette lived, a path was pointed out as steep as the roof of Catherine's sheepfold, and they were told: "There's no other; follow it."

"Well, that's a queer path," said Sylvaine, "it's the world upside down. One has to go on four feet like a goat to walk in this region. You're in your blue country now, Catherine! How does it suit you?"

"It's really blue," answered Catherine. "Look at the top of the mountain, mamma; you see plainly that it's blue!"

"It's snow you see, my poor child, and close-by it's white."

"Snow in summer?"

"Yes, because it's so cold up there the snow doesn't melt."

Catherine thought her mother was mistaken, but dared not contradict. She was eager to go to make sure of the truth, and climbed like a little goat, although she didn't have four feet at her service.

When they arrived at the village, Sylvaine very tired and Catherine a little out of breath, they were told that Aunt Colette didn't live there in the summer time; but

this was her parish, and her house was not very far off. Then a little roof of planks held down by big stones and surrounded by fir-trees was pointed out to them. They were told: "It's there; you've only to walk one short hour more, and you'll be there." Sylvaine all but lost heart. There was as much farther to climb before reaching this house as they had already climbed to get to the village, and the way was even more steep and frightful.

She feared that Catherine did not have the strength to go so far, and the spot seemed to her so ugly and wild that she really considered climbing down again and returning home speedily, without letting the old aunt know she had come. But Catherine wasn't at all tired or dismayed. Her attitude restored her mother's courage, and, when they had breakfasted, they began to climb again. It wasn't necessary to pick a good trail; there was only one, and they had no need of a guide. They wouldn't have been able to talk with him, for the people of this region only knew a few words of French. They spoke a dialect which neither Catherine nor her mother could understand.

But, at last, though the path was dangerous, they arrived without accident at the house roofed with planks. There were, all around, very pretty clusters of firs through which could be seen a gently sloping prairie, hollowed out in the center. This was without ditches or fences, but was protected from the avalanches by great stones. Above it was the snow which seemed to mount to heaven; first in white steps over the black rock beneath, then in icy crystals of a beautiful greenish blue. This last ended in the clouds.

"Now we're truly there, in the blue country!" thought Catherine, all athrill, "and, if we climbed a little more, we'd be in the sky." Just then she thought of something she

had forgotten a long time before. She said to herself that it was possible to mount into the clouds, and she remembered her rose-colored cloud like a dream of the distant past. The child was so delighted at the sight of the glacier that at first she didn't think much about Aunt Colette. However, she was anxious to see her aunt, and more than once on the way up she asked herself what sort of a person this might be.

VI

AUNT COLETTE was a tall pale woman with silvered hair and a quite lovely face. She did not seem much surprised to see Sylvaine. "I was waiting for you," she said, embracing her niece, "I'd dreamed of you and your daughter. Let's see if she is as I saw her in my dream."

Catherine came nearer; Aunt Colette regarded her with big gray eyes clear as crystal which seemed to see through people to the bottom of their souls. Then she kissed the little girl, saying: "She's all right, quite all right! I'm glad that this child came into the world."

After the travelers had rested a little, Aunt Colette showed them through her house.

This dwelling which at a distance looked small was large when viewed close-by. It was built all of wood, but of such good fir logs, so well put together that it was very strong. The big stones set on the roof kept the wind from carrying it off or shaking the frame-work too much. The interior was beautifully neat, and the waxed and gleaming pieces of furniture were a joy to behold. There were many copper dishes and vessels. For beds there were wooden frames stuffed with wool and hair, covered with snowy sheets and

downy comforters, for it was never warm up here. Aunt Colette kept an open fire all summer, but even then there was plenty of wood. A large part of the trees which enclosed the meadow belonged, as did the meadow itself, to Aunt Colette. In this pasture which was very wide, she kept fine cows, some goats, and a little donkey for carrying things up. There was a boy to look after the animals and a girl to do the housework and run errands. Aunt Colette loved to live well, and sent to the village twice a week for meat and bread; in a word, she was rich, very rich for a peasant. The good Sylvaine, who hadn't suspected it at all, for she had come to help her aunt if necessary, stared with wide-open eyes, and felt confused as if in the presence of a lady far above her. Catherine was a little upset also, not on account of being richer or poorer than her Great-aunt, but on perceiving that Aunt Colette had better manners than she herself. However, when she saw that her aunt was kind and agreeable, she made herself easy and even felt an affection for Aunt Colette as if she had always known her.

From the very first day Catherine began without ceremony to ask questions. She learned that her aunt had been maid to an old lady whom she nursed until the day of her death, and who had bequeathed her something to live on. "But she wasn't very rich, my old lady," added Aunt Colette, "and it isn't with what she could give me that I pay for the comforts you see in my home. It's because of my industry and skill."

"It's the fine cattle you know how to raise?" asked Sylvaine.

"My cattle keep things running finely," answered Madame Colette, "but where did I find the money to buy land

for stabling and feeding them? Can you guess, little Catherine?"

"No, Aunt, I can't guess at all."

"Can you spin, my child?"

"Oh, yes indeed, Aunt. If at my age I couldn't spin, I'd be very stupid indeed."

"Can you spin a very fine thread?"

"Why . . . yes, quite fine."

"She's the best spinner in our village," said Sylvaine proudly, "and whatever is given her to spin she can do."

"Could she spin cobwebs?" asked Aunt Colette.

Catherine thought her aunt was joking and answered laughingly: "I'm sorry, but I've never tried."

"Let's see how you spin," said Aunt Colette putting down an ebony distaff at Catherine's side, and giving her a tiny silver-mounted spindle.

"Oh, what pretty tools!" cried Catherine admiring the fineness of the distaff, which was straight as a reed, and of the spindle, which was light as a feather, "but to spin, Aunt, one must have something to put on the distaff."

"It's always possible to find something when one's enterprising," declared Aunt Colette.

"I don't see anything at all here to spin," said Catherine, "for you mentioned cobweb, and your house is too well dusted to have a bit of that."

"But outside, Catherine? Since you're on the doorstep, don't you see anything at all to put on your distaff?"

"No, Aunt, for the bark of the trees must be pounded and the wool from the sheep carded . . . unless one spins those clouds floating over the glacier like great balls of cotton."

"Well, who told you one couldn't spin clouds?"

"Pardon me, I didn't know it," said Catherine, becoming quite serious and absent-minded.

VII

"You should see," said Sylvaine, "that your Great-aunt is teasing you."

"Nevertheless," replied Aunt Colette, "do you know what they call me in these parts?"

"Not I," answered Sylvaine, "we don't understand the speech of the mountains, and you can make as much fun of us as you like in it."

"I'm not making fun of you. Call Benoît, my little manservant, who is serving up dinner in the arbor; he speaks French. Ask him what I'm called."

Sylvaine summoned Benoît, and asked him very politely the question: "Hereabouts, what do they call my aunt, Madame Colette?"

"Oh, to be sure," answered Benoît, "they call her the cloud-spinner!"

The little maid was asked the same question, and gave the same answer without hesitation.

"Well, here's something truly wonderful!" said Catherine to her mother, "spinning clouds! Well! However, Aunt," she added, "you're teaching me something I've always suspected; that clouds can be handled. When I was little, once . . ." she stopped when she saw her mother staring at her, as if to say: "don't begin that nonsense again!"

Madame Colette wanted to know what it was all about, and Sylvaine said: "Pardon a child, Aunt. She's still very young! Her thought isn't at all to joke with you as you

have been playful with her. That was your right, but she knows very well that it isn't hers."

"But," said the old lady, "that isn't telling me what she's trying to say!"

"Dear Aunt Colette," said Catherine, her eyes full of tears, "I'm not trying to be funny, and yet mamma thinks I'm fibbing. I'm sure that once, when I was little, I picked up a tiny white cloud in my apron!"

"Oh, that's it!" said Aunt Colette without appearing either vexed or surprised. "And what did you do with it, my dear? Did you try to spin it out?"

"No, Aunt, I let it fly away, and it got all rosy, and then it went out of sight singing."

"Did you understand what the song was about?"

"Not a word! I'm sorry, but I was so little."

"After it flew away, wasn't it turned into thunder?"

"You've quite hit upon the truth, Aunt; it broke down our roof, and it shattered our big apple-tree, which was all in flower."

"That's what one gets for not being on one's guard against ungrateful people!" exclaimed Madame Colette, still quite serious. "One must beware of what is changeable, and clouds are the most changeable things in the world. But I think you're hungry. Here's dinner ready. Help me crumb the soup, and we'll sit down to table."

The dinner was very good and Catherine did it full justice. The cheese and the custard were delicious. There was even dessert, for Aunt Colette served in a glass bowl delicious honey-macaroons she had made herself. Neither Sylvaine nor her daughter had ever had such a feast.

When they had finished, night having fallen, Madame Colette lighted her lamp and brought out a little coffer

which she placed on the table. "Come here," she said to Catherine. "You must know why I'm called the cloud-spinner. Come up close, too, Sylvaine; you shall learn how I've earned my little fortune."

What was there in this coffer whose key Aunt Colette held? Catherine was dying to know.

VIII

THERE was in it something white, soft and light, which was so like a cloud, that Catherine gave a cry of surprise, and Sylvaine, imagining that her aunt was a sorceress or a fairy, grew quite pale with fear.

However, it wasn't a cloud; it was a big mass of skeins of fine thread, but so delicate, so very delicate, that a hair would have had to be cut in ten parts to make anything as fine. It was so white that one dared not touch it, and so frail one feared to tangle it by breathing upon it.

"Oh, Aunt," cried Catherine, quite carried away, "if it's you who have spun that, it can truly be said you're the best spinner in the world."

"It was I who spun that," replied Madame Colette, "and every year I sell many of these boxes. You didn't notice on your way here that all the women make fine lace, which sells very dear? I can't supply them all, and there are many spinners who do quite good work, but none approaches me. They pay me ten times more for my thread than they do the others. They contend with each other as to who shall have it, because with mine they do work no one can do any more when I'm no longer in this world. Here I am very old, and it would be a great pity if my secret were lost; wouldn't it, Catherine?"

"Oh, Aunt," cried Catherine, "if you'd just be willing to give it to me! It isn't for the money; but I'd be so proud to do work like yours! Let me know your secret, won't you please?"

"Like that, right away?" said Aunt Colette laughing. "Well, I've already told you; it's a matter of learning to spin out the clouds."

She locked her coffer; then, having kissed Sylvaine and Catherine, she retired to her bedroom. They went to bed in the room where they already were. It held a third bed for Renée, the little maid.

As Renée's bed was quite close to Catherine's, they chattered in a low tone before going to sleep. Sylvaine was so tired she didn't have the time to listen to them. Catherine asked a thousand questions of Renée, who was about her own age. Catherine had only one idea in her head; she wanted to find out if Renée knew her Great-aunt's secret for spinning out clouds. "There's no other secret," said Renée, "than to have a great deal of skill and patience."

"But, to catch a cloud, put it on a distaff, keep it from melting away in your fingers, spin a thread from it . . ."

"That isn't what's hard; the chief thing is to make the cloud."

"What, make the cloud?"

"Why, yes, to card it!"

"To card the cloud! With what?"

Renée didn't answer; she was asleep.

Catherine tried to go to sleep too, but she was too excited; sleep didn't come. The candle was out, and in the fireplace there were only a few embers. However, Catherine saw a little light in the upper part of the room. She stuck her head out of the bed and saw that at the top of the

stairs up which Aunt Colette had gone, there was, the length of the door, a gleam of light. She couldn't hold herself in check, and, walking carefully with bare feet, she reached the stairs. They were wooden, and Catherine was very much afraid of their creaking. She was so light she succeeded in reaching the last step noiselessly and in peering into her aunt's room through the little crack of the door. Can you guess what she saw?

IX

SHE saw nothing at all except a small room kept very neatly, with a tiny lamp hung in the fireplace. There was no one in the room, and Catherine crept back quite ashamed, for she knew well she had just done something very bad in wanting to possess herself by trickery of a secret she didn't deserve to learn. She went back to bed reproaching herself, which made her have bad dreams. She resolved when she woke up the next morning not to be so curious any more and to await her aunt's good pleasure. Renée took her to milk the cows, and then they drove them to the meadow, if one can call the side of a mountain naturally covered with grass and not cultivated at all, a meadow. It was nevertheless a very pretty place. A beautiful icy-cold stream which ran from the glacier turned aside to follow the rock and went on to fall in cascades where the pasture-ground ended. Catherine, who had never seen a waterfall except in mill-gates, found this stream so beautiful that she blinded her eyes watching all the diamonds carried along in the sunshine. She did not dare yet to cross it, springing as Renée did from stone to stone; but she quickly got used to this, and after two hours it was a game for her.

She also wanted to climb up a little way on the glacier. Renée showed her how far one could go without danger of falling into crevasses, and taught her how to walk without slipping. At the end of the day, Catherine had become quite bold, and she even knew some words of the mountain-speech.

As all was new to her, she was greatly entertained, and took such a liking for the mountain that she was really grieved when Sylvaine spoke to her the next day about returning home. Aunt Colette was so gentle, so kind! Catherine loved her even more than the mountain.

"Well, my child," said Sylvaine, "there's a way to humor you; it's to stay here. Your Great-aunt wants to keep you, and she's promised me to teach you to card and to spin as well as she herself does. But time and patience are necessary, and, as I think you a little too lively and likely to change your mind, I said no. However, if you believe you're capable of learning to spin as well as your aunt, and you've already succeeded in spinning as well as I do, I mustn't oppose your becoming as rich and successful as she is. It's up to you to consider."

Catherine's first thought was to cling to her mother vowing that she never wanted to leave her; but next day, Sylvaine having said to her that it was very wrong not to take advantage of the chance to improve herself, she hesitated. The day after, Sylvaine said: "We're not rich. Your grown-up sister already has three children and your elder brother has five; I'm a widow, and I dread my old age. If you were rich and skillful, you could be the salvation of the whole family. Stay here; Aunt Colette loves you, and your little faults don't shock her. I see that she's even disposed to spoil you. The place pleases you; I'll come back to get you in

three months, and if you want to come back home with me, we'll return. If it's the contrary, you shall stay, and who knows if your aunt won't some day give you all she possesses?"

Catherine still cried when she thought of leaving her mother. "Stay with me," she begged, "I promise you I'll learn to card and spin perfectly."

But Sylvaine was already homesick. "If I stayed here," she said, "I'd die or go crazy. Consider if you want that! And on the other hand, if, when you can make us rich, you think you ought to refuse to do it."

Catherine went away to bed sobbing, but with the promise to her mother that she would do what she was told to do.

Next day, Renée did not awaken her and she slept until nine o'clock in the morning. Then she saw close by her bed Aunt Colette who said, kissing her: "Dear little Catherine, you must be brave and sensible! Your mother left very early; she kissed you with all her heart while you were sleeping and told me to tell you that she would return in three months. She didn't want to wake you up; you would have grieved too much to see her go." And as Catherine cried very hard, the while begging her aunt to excuse her grief: "I don't think it wrong for you to miss your mother," said Aunt Colette, "that's as it should be, and you wouldn't be a good daughter if you didn't grieve for her. But I ask you, for your own sake, my child, to be as courageous as possible. I promise you I'll do my best to make you happy with me. I must tell you that your mother feels very badly too, and if there's any one thing which will comfort her, it's to learn that you're submitting yourself with good grace to her will."

Catherine tried to overcome her grief, and kissed her aunt, promising to work very hard.

"For today," said Aunt Colette, "you're going to amuse yourself, and roam about the place. Tomorrow we'll begin work."

X

NEXT day, Catherine had her first lesson; but it wasn't what she expected. No secret was revealed to her; her aunt gave her a distaff loaded with flax and said: "Spin the finest yarn you can." It was quite enough for the first time, for, in Catherine's native place, they only spun hemp for making strong linen cloth. She didn't get along so badly, and yet it was so far, so very far, from what she wanted to do, that she was afraid to show her work. She expected reproaches; but instead her aunt complimented her, saying that it was very good for a first day, and that it would be still better the next day. Catherine asked to stay in the house; she would have liked to watch her aunt work. "No," said Aunt Colette, "I can't work when anyone's watching me. Besides I only work in my room, and at your age one can't stay cooped up. You shall work by walking about or by watching my cows, as you please. I'll not urge you on in any way, for I see that you're not a lazy girl. I know you'll do your best."

Certainly Catherine was not a sluggard. But she was impatient, and this way of learning all by herself didn't fit in with the idea of a great secret that she would have accepted as one swallows a cup of sugared milk. She did make a little progress every day; each evening she certainly produced her spindle loaded with a finer thread than that of the evening before. But it wasn't very apparent to her, and at the end of a week she felt bored and a little annoyed with her aunt whose encouragement put her out of patience. Renée, al-

though very good-natured and kind, also displeased Catherine because she was so calm. The little maid had as her task to look after the animals and the milk-food; she wasn't interested in another thing. Benoît was almost never about; he lived in the woods, and, when he had spare time, he hunted and didn't care for other company than that of his dog. Catherine often found herself alone. She only saw her Great-aunt at mealtimes; in the evening Madame Colette withdrew early to her room to work there. Renée began to snore as soon as her head hit the pillow; Catherine thought, dreamed, and sometimes cried. She told herself that at the rate Madame Colette managed things, she would be white-haired like her aunt before she could spin as well. Then she thought of her mother, and worried over what she would say when, after three months, she found her daughter no further along than on the first day.

One morning, Catherine went out early. She was resolved to spin so well that day as to force her aunt to confide the secret. She seated herself among the rocks so that there would be nothing around to distract her attention. But where is there nothing to see? Catherine lifted her eyes in spite of herself, and saw the glacier rising above her, and the summit of the mountain which chanced to be visible. Until this moment, Catherine had not seen it, because there had always been a mist covering it. As the sky was at last quite clear, she admired the beautiful jagged snow-banks, white in the blue air, and was seized with the desire to go up that far; but it was very dangerous. Renée had warned her against it, and Aunt Colette had forbidden her attempting it, saying that it was all right for boys.

Catherine sighed and contented herself with looking at the glacier which was so beautiful she would have liked to



"SPIN THE FINEST YARN YOU CAN," HER AUNT TOLD HER

touch it. It seemed very near, although it was really very far away. She saw then what she hadn't seen before in the sky of this region, flocks of little golden clouds, massed around the highest notch of the glacier, which made for it what seemed like a necklace of big pearls. "How pretty it is," she said to herself, "and how I should like to be able to make a thread fine enough to string pearls as light as these!"

As she was thinking this, she saw on the notch of the glacier something tiny, but sparkling, a red spot which moved in the rays of the sun, exactly over the necklace of little clouds. What could it be? A flower, a bird, a star?

XI

"If I had," she thought, "my Great-aunt's silver spectacles, I should certainly be able to see what it is, for she told me that with those glasses she saw all that her eyes by themselves do not perceive."

She had to content herself with her own eyes, and, steadily gazing, she saw the tiny red dot draw to it all the little golden clouds, until it was so enveloped in them one could no longer make it out at all. The little clouds, all united now, made just one big one which sparkled and turned into a golden ball on the highest summit, like the cock of a weather-vane on a clock-tower.

In a moment, that ball rose and mounted, growing steadily smaller until it became quite rosy. Catherine heard it singing in a voice pure as crystal, and to a tune, the most charming in the world: "Good morning, Catherine; Catherine, do you recognize me?"

"Yes, yes," cried Catherine, "I recognize you; I've car-

ried you in my apron! You're my little friend, the rosy cloud, the one that talks, and whose words I'm hearing now. Dear little cloud, you're a bit too playful. You broke my fine apple-tree all in flower, but I forgive you! You're so rosy, and I love you so much!"

The cloud answered: "It isn't I, Catherine, who broke your flowering apple-tree; it's the thunder, an evil-doer who lodges in my heart and who drives me mad. But, see, how gentle and quiet I am when you look at me with affection! Some day won't you come to the top of the glacier? It isn't so hard as you've been told; it's really quite easy. You've only to try it. Besides I'll be there, and if you fall, you'll fall on me. I'll hold you up so that you'll not be harmed. Come tomorrow, Catherine, come as soon as day breaks. I'll wait all night for you, and if you don't come, I'll be so grieved I'll burst into great tears, and there'll be rain all day."

"I'll go!" cried Catherine, "I'll surely go!"

Hardly had she made this answer when she heard a noise like a cannon-shot followed by an explosion of grapeshot. She was so afraid she fled, thinking that the mischievous cloud was beginning to betray her again and to return her evil for good. As she ran quite terrified towards the house, she met Benoît who was coming out with his dog. "Is it you," she said to him, "who made that clap of thunder with your gun?"

"The noise just now?" he replied laughing. "It isn't thunder, nor my gun; it's an avalanche."

"What do you mean?"

"It's the ice that melts in the sun, breaks into pieces and rolls, carrying with it stones, earth and sometimes trees, when it meets up with them on its passage; persons too, if

there are any unlucky enough not to get out of the way in time; but there's seldom such bad luck. It's quite uncommon, and you must get used to seeing those slides. Now that it's good weather again, you'll see them every day, and perhaps each hour of the day."

"I'll get used to it. But since you're here, Benoît, tell me if you'd climb clear up on the great notch of the glacier, you who are a boy and afraid of nothing?"

"No, I wouldn't," said Benoît, "people don't climb onto those notches. But I've been quite close to them and I've touched them with my foot. It isn't the season to amuse yourself doing that, though. It's too warm, and the crevasses might open up any minute."

"But tell me what that red thing is, to be seen every now and then on the point of the big notch?"

"You've seen it then, the red speck? You've good eyes! It's a flag travelers planted on the highest crag of the mountain about a month ago, to let those watching them down below know they'd succeeded in climbing that far. A strong gale came up which forced them to come down double-quick leaving their flag up there. The squall carried it onto the top of the glacier, and it's stayed caught there waiting for another tempest to unhook it."

Catherine had to content herself with Benoît's explanation. But an odd fancy passed through her head which came back to her on seeing at a distance Aunt Colette walking at the foot of the glacier with her hood of scarlet wool over her head and shoulders. She wasn't so far off that Catherine couldn't recognize her. Although the poor child hadn't spun three ells of thread that day, she went at once to meet her aunt, without thinking of laying aside her full distaff and her empty spindle.

XII

WHEN Catherine found herself quite close to her aunt she noted her absent-mindedness; but it was too late to draw back. She approached asking Madame Colette if she wasn't afraid of tiring herself out going on the glacier like that.

"At my age," replied Madame Colette, "one doesn't get tired any more. One walks as one wills and the legs follow without one's knowing if they are still active or not. But I'm not coming from the glacier, my child. At this season of the year it isn't safe. I follow the good paths; they are always to be found when one is experienced."

"Then, Aunt, it's really you who were up there about an hour ago? I saw your red hood."

"Up there, Catherine? What do you mean by up there?"

"I don't know," said Catherine a little confused, "I thought I saw you in the sky above the clouds."

"What could have made you think me capable of going so high as that? Do you take me for a fairy?"

"But, dear me, Aunt, if you were a fairy, what would there be surprising in that? I don't want to displease you. They say there are good and wicked fairies, and you can only be one of the good ones. I'm beginning to understand the villagers who climb up this way, and they speak the truth when they say you work like a fairy."

"They've often said it to me," answered Madame Colette, "but it's a figure of speech, and I'm not a fairy just for that. I see you have a little head filled with queer fancies. It's natural at your age, and I wouldn't want to see you as sensible as I am. It would be too soon to expect that. However, a tiny little bit of reason wouldn't hurt you any, my

darling. I see you haven't learned much about spinning today!"

"Alas, Aunt Colette, you could very well say I hadn't spun at all!"

"Don't cry, my child. That will come, that will come with time and patience . . ."

"Oh, you always talk like that," cried Catherine provoked, "you surely have an over-supply of patience, dear Aunt! You treat me like a little child; you don't think me capable of learning quickly, and so you will have it! . . ."

"Come, come!" said her aunt, "you reproach me as if there was a secret to take the place of determination and perseverance. I declare to you that I don't know of any, and that none has been revealed to me. You pout? You've some idea I don't get to the bottom of. Will you open your heart to me, and let me read there as in a book?"

"Yes, I'd like to," said Catherine sitting down on a big mossy stone close by Madame Colette. "I'll tell you everything, for I've a fault on my conscience. I think it's that which makes me a little queer."

Catherine then confessed her curiosity and told how she had looked through the crack of her aunt's door. "I didn't see or overhear anything," she said. "You weren't there at all. But, if you hadn't been out, I'd have seen you working, and have stolen your secret."

"You'd have stolen nothing at all," answered Madame Colette. "I repeat to you that I haven't any secret at all. If you had come into my room, you could have gone up into my workshop, which is above. It's there that I card what is called *the cloud*. It's unhealthy to card in a house because of the little bits which enter the nostrils and the lungs; so I do this work in the upper part of my chalet,

in a place where the air circulates freely and carries off the tiny bits which would harm you, you among the others. But you aren't telling me everything, Catherine. What fancy do you have concerning clouds, since you're always talking about them? Do you confuse the clouds in the sky with the fine white stuff I take from flax, and which in our region of skillful spinners is called cloud to indicate something exceedingly light?"

Catherine was very much mortified to find that she had stupidly misunderstood the meaning of a word, and had built a thousand idle fancies on her mistake. However, all that did not explain to her her own visions. Desiring to have her heart quite free of it, she went back to her rosy cloud, and told all there was to tell about it.

Madame Colette listened without reproving her and without laughing at her. Instead of scolding her and telling her to be silent as Sylvaine would have done, she wanted to know all the dreams there were in this little head. When she had heard all, she grew thoughtful and remained some moments without speaking. She finally said: "I see plainly that you love the marvelous, and that you must be careful there. I've also been a child, and dreamed of a rosy cloud. And then I've been a girl, and encountered it. He had gold on his coat and a big white plume . . ."

"What are you saying now, Aunt? Your cloud was dressed; he wore a plume?"

"It's a mode of speech, my child; it was a bright cloud, very bright, but nothing more. It was inconstancy; it was idle fancy. He brought the tempest, he also, and said it wasn't his fault, because he had thunder in his heart. And one fine day; that is to say an evil day, I was all but broken like your flowering apple-tree. But that cured me of be-

lieving in clouds, and I've stopped seeing them. Beware of clouds which pass, Catherine; above all, of rosy clouds! They promise fair weather and carry in them the tempest! "Come," she added, "take up your distaff and spin a little or have a nap. You'll spin better afterwards. One must never be discouraged. Dreams take wing; work remains."

Catherine tried to spin while talking with her aunt; but her eyes closed, and the distaff slipped from her fingers.

XIII

CATHERINE was all of a sudden shaken as if by an earthquake. She saw her aunt standing by her, and for the first time angry. Aunt Colette had a red hood pulled down over her shoulders, and her white hair floated like a halo around her beautiful pale face. "You're asleep, lazy girl," she said with an angry air. "I told you to choose and you've chosen. You dream without doing anything! Come, be up, and follow me. I see clearly I must give you my secret. You're going to learn it . . ."

Catherine got up, and, still half asleep, she followed Aunt Colette. But she followed her with difficulty, for the old lady walked faster than the wind, and mounted a great staircase of sapphires and emeralds with amazing swiftness. Catherine found herself in a diamond palace, where one walked on ermine carpets, through crystal colonnades. She quickly found herself at the top of the marvelous edifice. "Here we are on the summit of the glacier," said her aunt; then with an appalling laugh, "you must have the courage to follow me onto the great notch. Take hold of my dress. Come, you can't be afraid. The rosy cloud awaits you, and you've given it your word."

Catherine seized her aunt's skirt, but slipped and couldn't climb up. Then her aunt said: "Take the cord and don't be afraid of anything!"

She held out to Catherine a bit of yarn so fine, so very fine, that it could hardly be seen. Catherine grasped it, however, and, although she pulled very hard and slid back at each step, the thread didn't break at all.

She arrived thus at the tip of the glassy peak. There her aunt snatched away the distaff, planting it in the snow and saying in a terrible voice: "Since you don't know how to use that, here's the tool which is suitable for you!" And she put in Catherine's hands a brush as long and as hairy as a big fir-tree. Catherine took it resolutely, finding it very light.

"Now," said her aunt, "you must sweep." And she pushed Catherine violently into space.

XIV

CATHERINE thought she was hurled to the foot of the mountain, but nothing of the sort. She found herself held up in the air by the thread her aunt had twisted around her arm, and she could walk on the clouds as easily as if it had been the meadow. "Come, sweep," cried Madame Colette, "bring me here all these clouds. I must have them all, all, without missing a single one."

Catherine swept, swept, but never well enough and quick enough to suit her aunt, who cried: "Come, quicker and better than that! Farther, farther! Must I send you a cart and oxen to return me all these clouds?"

Catherine ran over all the sky, bringing back into a heap the clouds her big broom pushed along. In an in-

stant, she had neatly swept the whole sky. "Bring me the pile!" cried Dame Colette again. "Push, push! I must make a single one out of them and I must have it here in my hands!" Catherine pushed them forward, heaped them up, and Colette arranged them all into a huge stack which covered the whole notch of the glacier.

"Come back, now," she said, "you must help me; but wait while I put on my glasses!" She adjusted her big silver spectacles on her Roman nose: "What do I see?" she exclaimed, "you've forgotten the rosy cloud! Do you think I want to let off your fine friend? Run fast and hunt him for me. Don't let him get away!"

The rosy cloud gave Catherine quite a race. Hurried along by the wind, he was about to disappear. Catherine threw the yarn at him detaining him in the air, and soon he came to cower in her apron, singing in a sweet and plaintive voice: "Dear little apron which has already saved me, save me again! Catherine, good Catherine, take pity on me; don't give me over to the spinner!"

Catherine returned to her aunt. She had tucked up her apron and tied it, hoping that Dame Colette wouldn't notice. The fact is that her aunt was very busy. She had carefully straightened and carded her stack, and, using very fine cards, she commenced to comb the clouds. She went so fast that in a moment the task was finished. As Catherine stooped to lift a load of this bright stuff, her apron loosened, and the rosy cloud tumbled into the pile. "Oh, rogue that you are!" said her aunt, seizing him in the cards, "you thought I wouldn't find him! Into the pile, rosy cloud; into the pile with the others!"

"Aunt, Aunt, have mercy on that one!" cried Catherine, "mercy for my little cloud!"

"Put him on your distaff," answered Dame Colette, "there he is carded. Make him into thread, and quickly, quickly! I will have him!"

Catherine took up her distaff again, and spun, closing her eyes so as not to see the last gasp of the poor cloud. She heard feeble lamentations, and all but threw down her distaff and fled. However, her hands were numb and her eyes were dim. She found herself lying on the mossy stone, by the side of her aunt who was also asleep.

XV

CATHERINE got up, and roused Madame Colette, who said embracing her: "Well, we've been lazy both of us; we've been asleep. Did you dream something?"

"Oh, yes, Aunt; I dreamed I spun as well as you. But what I spun, alas, was my rosy cloud!"

"Well, my child, you should know I've been spinning mine for a long time. The rosy cloud was my caprice, my fancy, my evil destiny. I put it on my distaff, and work, beautiful and good work, made of the enemy a thread so light I've felt it no more. You shall do as I did. You'll not be able to keep clouds from passing, but you'll have laid in a store of courage. You'll seize the clouds, you'll card them, and you'll spin them so well that they'll not be able to make a storm about you and within your own nature.

Catherine didn't understand the lesson very well, but she never saw the rosy cloud again. When, three months later, her mother came to see her, she already spun ten times better than at first, and after some years she was as skillful as her Aunt Colette, whose rich heiress she finally became.

The Giant Yéous



TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER

GABRIELLE SAND

And you too, little rosy girl, you'll have to break stones on the road of life with your tiny hands. You'll break them very well, because you have a great deal of patience. When you've heard the story of the giant Yéous, you'll understand what a metaphor is.

The Giant Yéous

I

WHEN I was living in the charming town of Tarbes, there came to my door each week a poor cripple named Miquelon. He rode on a little donkey and was followed by his wife and his three children. I always gave them something and I always listened patiently to the sad story Miquelon recited under my window, because it invariably ended in a metaphor quite striking in the mouth of a beggar. "Good people," he said, "help a poor man who was a good worker and who hasn't deserved his bad luck. I had a cabin and a bit of land on the mountain. But one day when I was working industriously, the mountain gave way and left me as you see me now. The giant laid himself down on me."

The last year of my stay at Tarbes, I noticed that for several weeks Miquelon had not come to beg. I inquired if he was ill or dead. No one knew anything about it, for Miquelon was from the mountain. He lived at a distance, if indeed he had a home at all, which was doubtful. I persisted in my inquiries, for I was especially interested in Miquelon's three fine children. I had noticed that the eldest, a boy, was already twelve years old, very strong, apparently high-spirited and intelligent, so that he should have been able to go to work. I had reproached the parents for not having thought of that. Miquelon acknowledged his fault, and promised not to prolong this school for beggars, which is the worst aspect of the life. I had offered to give some-

thing and to get other people to contribute with a view to placing the boy in a school or on a farm. But Miquelon never came back, and I myself soon left this beautiful country.

Fifteen years later I found myself at Tarbes again for a short stay. As I had several days of leisure I didn't wish to leave the Pyrenees without having explored them a little. I joyfully revisited a part of the beautiful scenes which had charmed me of old.

One day, wishing to go from Campan to Argelez by a road new to me, I ventured on foot into the valleys sunk between the ridge of the southern peaks of France and that of Mont-Aigu. I did not feel that I needed a guide. The torrents, whose direction I had only to follow with my legs or with my eyes, seemed an Ariadne's thread bound to guide me in the maze of gorges. I was still young and nothing halted me. When I had climbed up to the charming little lake of Ouscouaou, I let myself be carried away by the temptation to explore the rocky heights on the other side, where there is another lake and another stream, the lake and the torrent of Isaby. From them the trails go down again towards Villongue and Pierrefitte. Thinking that I still had time to take that route, I turned to my left and plunged into a narrow gorge where the path became more and more steep.

It was there that I found myself face to face with a handsome mountaineer, very neatly dressed in brown wool, a red sash about his waist, a white Basque cap on his head, and hemp sandals on his feet. As we could not pass on this foot-path unless one of us drew aside against the rocky wall, I prepared to let him by, for he seemed more in a hurry than I. He politely raised his cap, but halted instead



HWH

I FOUND MYSELF FACE TO FACE WITH A HANDSOME
MOUNTAINEER

of passing me and regarded me with a strange look. I surveyed him also, feeling very sure I was not meeting his glance for the first time, but not able to remember where and when I had seen him.

"Oh," he cried suddenly in a joyful tone, "it's you! I'd know you anywhere. But you don't remember . . . Pardon me! I'll go ahead. It's not worth while to pass you, for two steps from here the path is easier. I want to ask how you are. I'm glad, more glad than I can tell, to meet you again!"

"But who are you, my friend?" I asked. "I've tried in vain . . ."

"We mustn't talk here," he replied. "You've taken a dangerous trail. You aren't a mountaineer, and must be careful where you step. Follow me; with me, there's no danger."

The path did become steep enough to cause dizziness. But I was young and a naturalist, so needed no help. Five minutes later, the path turned off and entered one of the gorges which come together like a star at the summit of Mont-Aigu. There was now sufficient room for us to walk side by side, and I begged my companion to tell me who he was.

"I am," he said, "Miquel Miquelon, the eldest son of poor Miquelon, the beggar who came to see you each market-day at Tarbes. You always gave him something with a friendly air which did my heart good. In that wretched calling one is often humiliated, which is worse than being refused."

"What? You were that little Miquel? . . . Now I recognize your eyes and your fine teeth."

"But not the black beard, I take it? I haven't forgotten that you wished me well. You weren't rich, I saw that, but

you would have given money to put me in school. My poor father died just at that time, and many things happened to me."

"Tell me what they were, Miquel. You seem to be no longer poverty-stricken, and I'm overjoyed to see it. Furthermore, if I can render you any service, I'm still ready to do so."

"No, thanks! After many difficulties, everything is going well with me now. But you could give me a great pleasure."

"Name it!"

"By coming and supping at my home."

"Gladly, if it isn't too far from here, and I can reach Argelez this evening, or at least Pierrefitte."

"No, you mustn't think of that. It isn't very far, my house, but it's rather high up. It's already four o'clock, and to climb down on this side after the sun has set is too dangerous. You have a good eye and a sure foot, but I wouldn't be easy about it. You must spend the night at my house. Come, do me this honor! You won't be at all badly off there. It's poor, but it's clean. I suffered too much in my childhood from filthy lodgings not to want to be clean. And you'll not die of hunger. I killed a chamois not eight days ago, and the meat is just right. Come, do come! If you refuse, I'll be more sorry than I can tell you."

This good Miquel was so sincere, he had such a pleasant face, that I accepted heartily. I would have gone just the same, if I'd had to lie on straw and sup on the sour milk and the hard bread of the herdsmen's cabins.

As we walked along, I asked Miquel a question. "We're coming to the most difficult part of the mountain," he said, "we mustn't talk. It's neither agreeable nor wise to do so. When we're at home, I'll tell you all my story, which is

queer enough, you'll see. Now step where I do, or rather—I haven't a large foot—put my sandals over your boots. You don't have the right sort of shoes."

"And you'd go barefooted?"

"I'll only walk the better for it."

I declined them; he insisted. I was obstinate and followed him, a little stung in my self-esteem as a mountain-climber. I must admit, though, that it was a real accomplishment to get through without accident. We climbed straight up difficult slopes to descend then into slippery ravines. We crossed snow covering smooth pebbles which gave way underfoot. The worst part was the grassy slopes on the marked-out trails, for they were broken up by the passage of the flocks.

At last we came out suddenly, after a last effort the most difficult of all, onto a beautiful pasture-ground. Beyond it opened a wide gorge between green hills overtopped by boldly outlined mountains farther on. We were in the heart or, to be more exact, in the collar-bones of those mysterious regions which conceal the great heights. Here one would think himself in the peaceful valleys of a tranquil Arcadia, if here and there an opening in the rampart had not permitted a glimpse of a glacier at the right and a frightful abyss at the left.

"Now we can talk," said Miquelon. "You are in my domain, for the whole of this little valley belongs to me. It isn't wide, but it's quite long. The soil is good and the grass delicious. Look down there! you can see my cabins and my flock. We live up here part of the year, and in the winter we go down into the valley."

"You say *we*; you are married then?"

"No, I'm not married. I have my two young sisters with

me. I'm not well enough off yet to have a wife and children before my sisters are settled. That will come without a doubt; there's no hurry, for we're living very happily together. I'll present them to you, those little girls you've already seen so miserably poor. Well, they're changed too. But, first, as we walk along, look at my fine cows."

"To be sure, they do honor to your pasturage. But it can't be easy to get them down from here?"

"On the contrary, it's very simple. At the other end of my little estate, there's a path which I have made very easy. The one on which I met you isn't the good one; it's only a short cut."

"I was walking at random. But you had a purpose, and I've made you lose out on it."

"I'm glad; I would have wanted to sacrifice something for the pleasure of seeing you. But the business I had at Lesponne can go over until tomorrow."

"We came to the fenced-in yard, the garden, as it were, of the residence. To tell the truth, there weren't many kinds of vegetables; I believe I saw only turnips. The climate at this altitude is too cold to grow anything else. To make up for this, the wild plants were very interesting, and I promised myself to examine them the next morning. Miquel was in a hurry for me to enter his dwelling which stood in the midst of cabins of planks intended for the cattle. It had the look of a real home. The material was unpolished reddish marble, with a strong, very low frame, roofed with thin pieces of slate put on like tiles. It could brave the two meters of snow which buried it every winter. Within, there were two pleasant rooms, well heated, and furnished with heavy pieces of furniture made of fir. In one, the sisters slept and worked, preparing the meals; in the other Miquel

had his bed, a real bed, without sheets it is true, but provided with very clean wool blankets. He also had a cupboard, a table, three stools, and a dozen books on a shelf.

"I'm glad to see you can read," I said.

"Yes, I learned a little about it from others, and more by myself. When there's a will! But let me go find my sisters."

He left me alone after having put an armful of pine-branches into the fireplace. I examined his books, curious to see of what his library was composed. To my great surprise, I found there only translations of works of the highest type: the Bible, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the *Lusiad*, the *Orlando Furioso*, *Don Quixote* and *Robinson Crusoe*. It is true that not one of these books was whole; their tattered state proved their constant use. Besides, some leaves stitched together contained the popular legend of the four sons of Aymon, and different Spanish and French versions of the song of Roland. Finally, there was a little treatise on astronomy, very much worn but whole.

Miquel came back with his sisters, Myrtille and Mague-lonne, two tall girls of eighteen and twenty years. They were wonderfully pretty under their hoods of scarlet wool, and were neatly dressed in Sunday best. After having driven in their cows they had hurried to make this toilet in my honor. They made no effort to conceal this fact, and were frank and unaffected in their welcome. After we had renewed our acquaintance, although only the elder sister remembered me, one hurried to put the haunch of chamois on the spit, while the other set up the table and laid the dinner-things. All was very clean, and the meal was excellent, the game cooked to a turn, the cheeses good, the water pure and delicious, the coffee tolerable—for there was cof-

fee. It was the only stimulant which the master permitted himself, for he never drank wine.

I found the sisters charmingly natural and full of good sense. The elder, Maguelonne, had a resolute air; Myrtille, more timid, had a touching sweetness in her glance and in her voice. More concerned with serving us well than with attracting attention, they talked little, but their responses were sensible and kind. When the dinner-things were taken away: "Are you tired?" asked Miquel. "Do you want to go to sleep, or to hear my story?"

"I'm not tired. I want to know how you've managed. I'm waiting eagerly to hear your story."

"Then," he said, "I'll tell it to you." He turned towards his sisters, "you know it well enough and more than enough, you two."

"No, we don't," answered Maguelonne.

"That is to say," added Myrtille, "it depends. We know it after a fashion; but on the other hand . . . you never tell it as often as we'd like."

My surprised glance demanded from Miquel the meaning of this rather vague answer. He addressed himself to Maguelonne: "Say it so that our guest can understand," he said. "The child expresses herself well enough, but you talk more clearly, on account of being the elder."

"Oh, I can't explain it," cried Maguelonne, reddening.

"Do explain it to me," I said. "I promise to ask you questions, if I don't understand right away."

"Well!" she answered, still a little confused, "here's what it is. My brother doesn't tell it badly when he speaks of things as they would seem to anyone. But when he speaks of things as he himself has seen them and heard them, he is more amusing. There are days when we never tire of

listening to him. Tell him not to be bashful. Perhaps he'll find at the tip of his tongue fancies like those in his books."

I begged Miquel to give his imagination full rein, since it must play a part in his tale. He gave his sisters an indulgent and kindly smile, and collected his thoughts a moment while poking the fire. All at once, his eyes shining and his gestures full of spirit, he began his story.

II

"THERE is on the slope of Mont-Aigu, a hundred meters above us—I'll show it to you tomorrow—a plateau, held up by great cliffs. They're broken into by little valleys like the one where we are, providing fine pasturage when the snow is melted. It's colder up there, the winter is longer; that's all the difference. This plateau has a strange name. It's called the plateau of Yéous. Can you tell me what this name means?"

After having thought a moment: "I've heard it said," I answered, "that many of the mountains of the Pyrenees were consecrated to Jupiter or *Zeus*, which may be, I believe, pronounced Yéous . . ."

"That's it!" cried Miquel delightedly. "You see, girls, I haven't made that up, and educated people side with me. Now my friend, tell me if you remember the sentence which always ended the lament of my poor father when he asked alms."

"I remember it very well. 'The giant,' he said, 'laid himself down on me.'"

"Then you're going to understand. My father was a poet. He had been reared by the old Spanish shepherds on the high pasturelands along the frontier. All these men

knew fanciful tales and ballads, which are now forgotten. They could all read, and many knew some Latin, having studied to be priests. But they hadn't known enough, had committed some breach of the rule, or might even have been involved in political conspiracies. It's so true that this is a lost race, no one will believe any more in our part of the country that these shepherds knew all the things they really did teach. My father had learned their secrets and still believed in them. As he had a bent for the marvelous, he reared me with these ideas; so don't be surprised if I still have them.

I was born in this house, that is to say on the site which it occupies. It was then a simple hut like those in which I shelter my cattle. My father was the owner of a part of this piece of land. Higher still was the plateau of Yéous, where he took me sometimes to note the state of the snows—if we must lengthen or shorten our stay on the mountain. Every time we passed before the giant, that is to say before a great upright rock which, seen from afar, had a little the look of an enormous statue, he made the sign of the cross, and ordered me to spit, as he himself did. It was, to his mind, the act of a good Christian. This giant Yéous, who gave his name to the plateau, was a heathen god; you might as well say a demon hostile to the human race. For a long time the giant, as my father saw him, made me afraid. But when I spit into the air for his benefit, I saw that he endured this insult without budging. I thus came to scorn him absolutely.

One day about noon—I was then eight years old and remember it very well—my father was working in our little garden. My mother and my sisters—Maguelonne, who already knew how to milk and look after the cows, and

Myrtle, who was beginning to walk alone—were at the end of the close with the animals. I was busy churning milk two steps from the house. All at once a noise like thunder ran along over my head with a gust of wind which threw me down. I fell stunned and deafened, as if knocked on the head, although I wasn't hurt at all. I lay there motionless for a full moment without understanding what had happened to me.

Frightful cries aroused me. I got up, and, though close by the house, I saw it no longer. It had sunk to the ground, crushed under enormous stones. They were carried along by others, and commenced to roll towards me. I understood that it was an avalanche. I ran away, bewildered, without knowing where I was going, and finally reached my mother and my sisters who were calling me with desperate cries. I turned around then, and saw that the landslide was halted. The giant Yéous was no longer on his rocky base. He had fallen down on our house and covered with his broken-up mass our garden and the largest part of our inclosure. Then my mother cried: "Your father? Where is your father?"

"My father? I don't know."

"Oh, woe is me! He is crushed! Stay here; watch the little ones. I must run to help him!" And my poor mother ran towards the mass of stone and dirt, still scarcely settled. I felt that I must follow her. I put the children in a big hollow in the ground. I forbade them to stir. I ran after my mother through the landslide, looking for and calling my father. I must say to the credit of these two girls that they only pretended to obey me. A moment later, they ran after me into the waste, the bigger one dragging along the little one, hunting and calling as well as they could. Now and then we stopped calling to listen. This went on a good hour.

At last I heard a weak groaning. I rushed forward, and found my poor father caught under a pile of dirt and rocks and not able to free himself. It was merely a lucky chance that he hadn't been crushed to death, for the rock had happened to form a vault over his head and his body. The impact had broken the bones of his legs and of his right arm. That's why he couldn't free himself. He had made so many fruitless and painful efforts that he was worn out and fainted on seeing us. We managed to lift him out. My mother was like a madwoman. What would become of a man half dead in this solitary place where no shelter remained for us, not an inch of ground which wasn't covered with rubbish, not a piece of furniture which wasn't smashed!

Maguelonne did not lose her head. She pointed to the cabins on the plot of ground below ours. She ran like a chamois in that direction. I understood that she was going to get aid and I began to gather up pieces of wood to make a stretcher. When those who lived in the huts below came running, they had only to bind the wood together. My father was carried down to their place as quickly as possible. The doctor was called, and my father was well tended. But too much time had gone by before the doctor was called, and there was considerable swelling. His arm knit poorly, and one of his legs had been so shattered it had to be cut off. That's how this honest man could no longer work, and fell into want. He bought a donkey and begged along the roads with his family. We did have in the lower part of the valley, not far from Pierrefitte, a little house for winter. But our greatest income had been from our cows, and there was no longer anything to feed them. We had to sell the two which were left. The other three, terrified by the giant's fall, had plunged over precipices to their deaths.

My mother was very reluctant to beg. She wanted to look for some work in town and take care of her husband at home. But he couldn't endure the idea of keeping still. The exhibiting of his misfortunes in order to feed his family seemed to him a task before which he must not draw back. It was really a kind of work in that it was unceasing and we were on the road in all weathers. For my mother, who had to lead along and often carry the little girl, it was hard enough. I had only to care for the donkey, and it was a life of leisure and of idleness for me. There was also the temptation towards wrong-doing, and the likelihood of becoming a bandit. I've told you that my father was a poet. I use this word because, without knowing yet what it meant, I heard him called a poet by well-appearing people. They listened to him, astonished at his words and his ideas. You were very busy and never had the time to question him at length, or like the others you would have been surprised at his understanding.

It was my father's character which kept me in the right path. He taught me after his fashion while talking with me. He made me see everything noble or beautiful, to such a degree that when I saw evil pass near me, I found it ugly and petty. I gladly turned my back on it. It is true that my father did not teach me to read; it didn't occur to him to do so. This life of continual travel does not make one industrious, and I had no desire to give myself the trouble of studying. It must be said, too, that since his accident my father had become over-excited. He did not have the calm necessary for regular teaching. He only instructed us by tales, by ballads and by similes. My sisters and I had good understandings without knowing our ABC's. Our poor mother knew them no more than did we.

We went about the watering-places during the season. We went to Bagnères de Bigorre, to Luchon, to Saint-Sauveur, to Cauterets, to Barèges, to the Eaux-Bonnes, wherever there were rich foreigners. In the winter we came down to Tarbes, Pau and the great valleys. At this work, taking in a great deal and spending little, for we were all frugal, we had in a few years acquired more than we had lost. Then my mother, who had her heart in the right place, tried to persuade my father that we did not have the right any more to take advantage of public charity. She said I was old enough to earn my living, and that she herself with Maguelonne's aid would undertake to support the rest of the family by her work as laundress. My father did not listen. He had acquired a taste for this roving life, not so much because it paid as because it amused him and made him forget his infirmity. I agreed with my mother, but we had to give in. That sort of life would perhaps have lasted still longer, if my poor father had not been taken with inflammation of the lungs and died in a few days. This was a great grief for us. Though he opposed our wishes, he was so good, so worthy and so loving that we adored him.

After this misfortune, we went back to Pierrefitte. My mother, having again set up her little establishment, took me apart and said: "My child, I must tell you how things stand with us. Your father left us something. Poor people like him don't make a will. He trusted me, leaving me free to act in what seemed to me the best interests of the children. I want you to know that we four possess between us three thousand francs. I have divided it into two equal parts, one for me and your two sisters, and the other for you." "That's not right," I cried. "I'm only entitled to one fourth." "It's not a question of what you're entitled to," she replied.

"It's your needs, about which I'm concerned. I'm a better judge of them than you are. I'm sure to get work. The girls will help me, and we'll get along very well with the little reserve fund we have. But you're a boy, and must earn your living honorably. I don't intend to feed and support you. That would be to incline you to softness and to loafing. See to it that you get a trade; I'm going to give you a hundred francs so that you can look about for your right work and make a careful choice. It's only just that, afterwards, when you have to get on in your work without aid, you should have it made up to you by a sum larger than your sisters receive. Understand that when you're twenty-one years old you may come back to get the fourteen hundred francs. If I'm dead, you'll find the sum just the same, since I'm going to put it in your name. Moreover, if I'm dead, your sisters of whose good hearts I'm quite certain will know about the matter and approve of what I've done."

With tears in my eyes I kissed my mother and my sisters. I then set out, my best clothes at the end of a stick over my shoulder, my hundred francs in my pocket. I was very sad at leaving my family, but was resolved to do my duty.

III

"UP TO now," went on Miquel, "I've told you the happenings just as they were. Now I'm going to ask your permission to tell them as they seemed to me from the moment I found myself alone in the world, thrown on my own resources at the age of fifteen years. My mother had, however, given me some advice. She had urged me to go see our relatives and various persons who had taken an interest in us. They would help me, if necessary. But I had an idea,

a childish idea if you choose, but very much impressed on my mind. I wanted to see our poor abandoned holding again, our wrecked cabin, the place where I had seen my father crippled and struggling to free himself from under the rock. He had so often spoken of this disaster, he had so often recounted the details in his vivid language, to gain the attention and excite the interest of charitable persons, that I hadn't forgotten it at all. I even believed that I remembered more details than I had actually noted at the time. These I had made up in my own head . . . But you're going to see all there was in this head of mine. There's no need to tell you in advance.

I walked directly towards Mont-Aigu. We had come and gone so many times in our begging pilgrimages, that I knew very well where I was. But when I had to leave the lowlands, I was speedily confused. I didn't remember the way any longer. Climbing at random, after many fruitless steps I found myself in our plot, quite recognizable because of the landslides which covered it. It was still our property. We had no more thought of selling it than anyone else had of buying it. It had no value any more.

The recent loss of my father had increased the sadness of my memories. When I saw the giant broken into a thousand pieces, but firm, calm and as if triumphant, I flew into a great rage. "Horrid giant," I cried, "stupid beast of a Yéous, I'm going to avenge my father. I'm going to insult you and curse you. Many times, when I was little, I spit into the air for your benefit. Now that I'm big and you're stretched out here at my feet, I'm going to spit in your very face!" I went about hunting in the rubbish for what might be the giant's head, and I thought I found it. With all my strength I dealt it a blow with my iron-tipped staff, and

then . . . then, believe me if you choose, I heard a heavy voice which roared like thunder underground, "Is it you? What do you want?" It gave me such a scare that I fled, thinking a new avalanche was on its way. But I came back in just a moment. I had not spit. I wanted to spit on the giant's face, even though he swallowed me up for it. I resolutely gave him this insult without his seeming to notice it. "That's it," I said, "you're always so cowardly! Well, I'm going to roll you into the torrent so that you'll be quite broken to pieces!" And forthwith I struggled to move the great rock.

I lost time and labor in this effort. When I saw that I was gaining nothing, I tried to break the giant's head by hurling other stones at it. I at least had the satisfaction of seeing that it wasn't a very hard rock. My blows made gashes which I took for wounds. When I was quite worn out, I went to see again close-by the ruins of our cabin. I was surprised to find a little corner of it where one could find a shelter in case of rain. This little corner had even been enclosed by a bit of wall put up not long before by some goat-herd. It had been abandoned after a stay more or less long, for there was no trace of footsteps on the grass which sprang, tall and thick, all about the ruin. As the sun went down, I made up my mind to pass the night here. I lifted some stones, and closed up the entrance so as not to be surprised by the wolves.

Seating myself on a piece of flooring, I began to eat a loaf of bread I had brought in my canvas knapsack. Then, feeling tired and bored by the solitude, I stretched myself out to go to sleep. But I was feverish because of having tramped too much and been too excited. I wasn't used any longer to the great stillness of the mountains, which is like

nothing else in the world. Even the unceasing noise of the torrents does not seem to interrupt it. Furthermore my bed wasn't very soft. Although not hard to please I turned from one side to the other without being able to stretch out comfortably. My resting-place was such a tight fit, I sat up on my heels, and, as I needed air, I pushed aside one of the stones piled up to protect me.

Looking out in order to kill time, what was my surprise to see that with the rising of the moon all was transformed in the inclosure! Everything was green, all covered with grass, and if there were still some scattered rocks, they were no larger or more numerous than a little flock of sheep. I was so surprised that I came out of my shelter to touch the ground and the grass with my feet. I wished to assure myself that I was no longer in a landslide, but was treading the beautiful meadow of former days, and that it wasn't a dream at all. I rejoiced still more than I wondered at it, when all at once, turning around, I saw behind me as tall as a pyramid, the giant. At first he seemed to me as he had formerly, when he reared himself at the edge of the plateau of Yéous above ours. But as I regarded him, he changed his appearance. His base shrank till it was like a pedestal, his body took on the look of the human form, his head appeared like a large ball. He only lacked arms, and when I had looked him over still more carefully I saw that he had them, except that they were fixed tight against his body. Nothing about him budged. He was a real statue, but so tall that I could not make out his face.

I should have been afraid before such a thing. But, account for it as you will, I was only enraged. My first move was to pick up a stone and hurl it at him. I didn't even touch him. I then threw a second which grazed his thigh, and a

third which struck him full in the chest and made a sound as if it had struck a big metal bell. At that moment a hoarse cry, enraged, savage, seemed to come from his breast, repeated by all the echoes of the mountain. My anger was increased at the sound, and I peppered him with all the stones which had served to close me in. Becoming at each trial stronger and more skillful, I finally hit him in the very center of his face. His head fell, forthwith, and came rolling at my feet. I darted forward to try to break it up still more with my staff. But I was halted by a shrill voice which came from this monstrous head. It gave a dry laugh like that of a toothless old man. "Is it you, beast," I said, "who has this ridiculous fashion of laughing or of weeping? I'm going to make you be silent. Just you wait a little!" And I went on redoubling my blows, when all at once the head disappeared and was replaced on the shoulders of the giant without my being able to see how he set about picking it up. I became furious. I began again to attack him with a rain of stones. I hit him on the left arm; the arm fell, but it was replaced on the giant's body just as I hit him and caused his right arm to fall. I attacked his legs, those ugly legs which were stuck together. Then the colossus broke up at the base and stretched out his whole length on the ground, broken into a thousand pieces. I saw that I had done the most foolish thing in the world, for the beautiful prairie had disappeared anew under the rubbish. The first morning beams showed me the dreary inclosure, full of rubbish and covered with dust, just as I had found it when I arrived the evening before.

I was so tired, so overcome by the fury of this combat lasting all the night, that I let myself fall where I was. I slept as soundly as if I had myself been changed into

stone. When the sun, already high in the heavens and giving out considerable warmth, woke me up, I thought I had had a terrible dream. I began to think over my experience, while eating the rest of my bread and gathering those black berries called in our part of the country *bear's whortleberries*. My dream, if it was one, must mean something for me. But what? I tried to think and couldn't. There was one thing which I couldn't question, that, however often the giant appeared to me, I had not been and I never would be afraid of him. I hated him for the evil he had done to my father. I had only one thought, to avenge myself on him and to humble him as much as I could.

In broad daylight, I made sure that everything about me was just as we had left it eight years before. The house was entirely ruined and unfit for use; the prairie was quite buried under a mountain of rocks, of broken stones and of sand. There was no way of making any further use of it. Furthermore, the ice of the plateau of Yéous, which formerly did not come down where we were, had opened a passage for itself the winter before. The mark of it was visible the length of the rock. The giant's fall had dug a large trench through which the ice and snow slid onto our land. That circumstance was a new cause of havoc.

In spite of there being so many reasons for discouragement, I had an idea which set my head afire. I wanted to reconquer my property and throw the giant out. How? By what means? I didn't know, but I intended to find out.

While thinking about it, I picked up stones and threw them one on top of the others, trying to clear a corner, were it only as large as my body. I wanted to see if the soil was full of sand too deep down to regain its former richness. I was surprised to find very thick grass in the spots where

the stone did not crush it. This grass grew too well, for it was rotting in the dampness. The streams could not drain off the land any more, and they formed puddles or little marshes everywhere. The soil was moist and light, and I could plunge my hands deep down into it. I made sure it was still good soil, capable of producing well, if only it could be rendered healthy by well-arranged ditches.

In an hour I cleared off about a meter of it. I rested a moment and then resumed my work with even more eagerness. Towards evening I measured what I had done. I had cleaned about six good meters of ground. It is true that it was in the less thickly covered part, where the smaller stones were. "Never mind," I thought, "who knows what I could do if given time?"

I was very hungry and went down to the inclosure of Maury, the one next below ours, which is occupied almost all the year. It had been sold recently, so that I knew no one there. However, I had money, and although nothing was asked for giving me supper, I spoke of paying for what I ate. I did not intend to be a burden, counting on staying there for several days.

Father Bradat, the shepherd in charge of the flocks, was a fine old man who, while welcoming me very kindly, was astonished at my idea, the more so because I was careful not to tell him what was really behind it. "You're looking for work with me?" he asked. "I'm sorry, my child, but I have all the help I need and cannot hire you."

"I'm not looking for work at the moment," I said. "I've plenty of work, and I've also some money to count on. You might think I was a vagabond, trying to hide himself in the mountains with the idea of committing or hiding some mis-

deed. I'm going to tell you right away who I am. Have you ever heard tell of Miquelon?"

"Yes, it's a name known here because the plateau above us is called Miquelon's inclosure. An accident happened to this poor man. I've only been here four years, but I've heard about it."

"Well, Miquelon was my father and that poor piece of land belongs to me. I was raised there. I hadn't seen it since I was eight years old, and it gave me a sad sort of joy to find myself there again. I spent last night on my land, and I want to go back tomorrow; perhaps the day after, too."

"If that's it," said the old man, "you shall stay a week, and more, if you wish. I'll not take any pay, for I'm in debt to you."

"How?"

"It's this way. I've often sent my goats to feed on your plateau and I haven't this right. But as the place was abandoned I didn't think I was wronging any one by not letting the small amount of grass which still grows there go to waste. It's a very little bit, but all the same it's something. I told myself that if someone came to reclaim it, I was ready to pay him for what was eaten by my animals. Here you are, and I've a chance to make good my words. Stay and save your money. I'm glad to be quits with you."

I had to accept. I took my place that night among his lads, eating his soup and lying on his straw. I was tired and slept well. At the break of day I set out for my inclosure, with bread and a bit of pork for my day's ration.

This day I only worked mentally. I wanted to calculate, a thing quite impossible for me it would seem, how many hours of toil it would take me to clear my piece of ground. If I'd been able, as I am today, to put down figures on paper,

the one under the other, the undertaking would not have been absolutely unreasonable. But I only knew how to carry them in my head, and it took me a long time. At that I didn't go about it so badly. I patiently measured off with my stick the surface of the ground. Tracing with the tip of my knife on a soft rock, I invented signs for my use to take the place of figures. For example a simple cross stood for 100, a double cross for 200, and so on. In a day I succeeded in roughly estimating without too much error how many meters I owned in length and breadth. The following days, I worked to figure out how much time it would take me to do the easy part of the work. I found it was two years, at five months' work per year, because the snow permitted no more. Then I had to estimate the duration of the more difficult part of the work.

I borrowed an iron sledge-hammer from my host, and I attacked the big pieces. It was not very hard limestone, and I did a roadmaker's work without feeling tired. I was happy and proud to be breaking the big body of the giant into bits. I wanted to do my meter a day, and I did it. Then one evening I found myself so tired that I didn't want to climb down. I resolved to spend the night at home so as to be quite rested the next day.

I was scarcely asleep in what was left of the shed, when I was awakened by the giant. This time he walked calmly up and down. I looked at the ground, and I saw it absolutely cleared and covered with its beautiful turf. The sky was still somewhat light, the west was touched with pink, and the snows on the heights above mounted all rosy into the blue sky. I set about observing the monster, whose step shook the ground. He didn't seem to pay any attention to me and I kept quiet, to find out what his habits were. I

was determined not to act foolishly like the first time, and to find out if he wouldn't take the notion to go away of himself, since now he could walk. He must be tired of the blows I had given him during the day.

Indeed he wanted to go away, and he tried to mount again to the plateau of Yéous. He went about it very badly, for instead of going around he meant to scale the steepest part of the cliff, following the same course he had taken when he came down. He hadn't taken two strides along the steep slope, when he fell on his knees, his nose on the ground, roaring and crying in a frightful voice: "Will no one help me climb up to my house?" In two jumps, I was close by him. Grasping his dreadful hand clinging to a point of rock: "Now then," I said, "you know very well I'm your master. Obey me, take another path, and be off with you!"

"Lift me up again," he demanded. "Take me on your shoulders and carry me up there."

"You lack sense. I wouldn't be able to lift even one of your fingers, but I'll pester you so unmercifully here . . ."

"Can't you leave me alone, child. I'm very well off here, and I'm going to stay. I just want to sleep on my back. Help me!"

I dealt him a kick, and, turning, he showed me his great ugly face all covered with white lichen. With him thus at my mercy, I felt all the hatred I bore him break out again. I was unable to resist the desire to plunge my stick into his mouth. He didn't seem to notice it. But a little faint voice issued from that cavern which served him as a mouth. Listening, I heard this plaint:

"Oh, bad boy, to tear my web and all but crush me!"

"Who are you?" I cried, drawing my stick out carefully and putting my ear to the giant's mouth.

"I'm the little spider of the mosses," answered the voice. "All my life I've lived here. I work, I spin, I hunt. Why do you disturb me?"

"Go spin and hunt somewhere else, my dear. The world is big enough for you."

"I could say the same thing to you," she replied. "Why do you keep after this rock which belongs to me? Isn't there some other place than this for you?"

At this moment, the giant, whom I began again to tickle with my cudgel, yawned and drove the spider far away. Driven on as if by a tornado, I finally tumbled down at the foot of the cliff.

As I lay there, it occurred to me that this little spider had lived all her life in the giant's mouth without being alarmed over his freaks. She would still be living there, if I had not disturbed her. Why shouldn't I make shift to live by the side of my enemy, and not require him to go farther away? Wasn't he comfortable there on his back, his feet resting on the blocks which had formerly been his pedestal, and his body placed so as to stop the slipping down of the snows? I climbed towards him, and planting myself by one of his great ears, for my voice must seem as weak to him as that of the spider did to me: "You mean," I said, "that you're comfortable, and want to stay here?" "Yes," answered the fearful voice which seemed to come from his stomach. "I'll stay here when you've made me a bed."

"Oh, really, monsieur must have a bed!" I replied, bursting out laughing, "a bed of down perhaps?"

"I'd be satisfied with a good bed of sand. But I must have a hollow for my head, a hollow for each of my limbs,

and especially a great hollow for my back, so that I can sleep without sliding down. Be quick, prepare this for me, and try to make me comfortable! Otherwise I'll be back to sprawl in your meadow. Except when you tickle me from time to time trying to torment me, I don't find myself at all badly off there."

"That's a fact," said a human voice beside me. "The most sensible thing to do would be to settle him down there handsomely. He would serve as a dam for the ice from above. I don't know a spot where he would be less trouble to you. You can't hope to carry him back to his old place, and you haven't the right to dump him out from your land any other way."

"How's that?" I replied, without trying to find out who was speaking to me in this fashion, "I don't have the right? He has the right then to seize onto my land?"

"He only has the right of the more strong," replied the voice, "but you don't have it, for the law is more strong than man. If you get rid of your enemy by making him roll onto your neighbor's land, you will be interfered with or punished."

"And if I drive him into the abysses?"

"There's no abyss which isn't on some one's property. Besides, at the bottom of each abyss, there's a flowing stream which belongs to all the world. You haven't the right to stop it or turn it aside. You must keep your giant, and since yonder cliff belongs to you, there he must be carried stone by stone. In this way he will become useful to you instead of doing you harm."

I was going to reply that I didn't need to carry him there, since he traveled that way himself, when my eyes cleared up. I saw that I was seated in the cabin of my old

host, before his fireplace. It was he who was talking with me. "Come," he said, "you talk like a boy who is dreaming while wide awake. But though you express yourself in a queer fashion, your ideas are good enough. Come and eat. You got in late, but I waited for you. We'll talk some more before going to sleep."

I didn't know what I had been saying, and was ashamed to admit it. Had I dreamed, while returning to my lodging-place, that I was struggling with the giant, that a little spider had spoken to me, and that the giant had given me his terms? Had I had the folly to tell all this to Father Bradat? Or had all these things happened to me at sunset, and had the giant, who was certainly a magician, carried me to the Bradat cabin without my knowing it?

When I had eaten a little: "What were we talking about just now?" I asked the old shepherd.

"Now then, have you fallen asleep?" he replied. "Have you forgotten all about it already? You wear yourself out with this rock. You're too young to do such heavy work all alone."

"How many people do you think it would take to carry it through?"

"That depends on the time you're willing to spend. In two seasons, I think a dozen good workers could finish it."

"A dozen? Are you sure? I thought that by myself I could . . ."

"You're dreaming! There'd have to be a dozen, and in many places you'd have to spring mines to break up the big rocks."

"Spring mines!" I cried. Here was an idea which pleased me. "Yes, yes, if I put fire under his body, he'd have to go away."

"Doubtless, but he won't go away unless he's made to."

"He'll go, I tell you! He's a lazy beast who won't help me or an idiot who don't know what he's doing. But when he feels the powder . . ."

"It's a rock; it's broken to pieces, but all the same you must make a sort of bank with the 'fragments. That will cost much money. Are you rich?"

"I've a hundred francs."

Father Bradat began to laugh. "It's not enough," he said. "You'd have to have at least ten times that."

"I'll have that some day."

"Well, wait until you do."

"You think, then, that it's not a piece of folly to want to recover my estate from this giant?"

"Well, land is a good and sacred thing. When you have it, it's a pity to be forced to abandon it. God doesn't want us to give it up as long as we're able to dispute it with the ice and the stone."

"That is with the evil spirits! Well, I'll dispute it with this stupid and cruel demon who tried to slay my father and who has destroyed my house. It's he who made me a beggar, wandering along the roads during all my childhood, while he, the brute, the idiot, slept his heavy sleep on our prairie. He'll get out of it, I tell you! I detest him too much to let him stay there, now that I'm beginning to be a man. Even though I use up all the money I have now, and all the money I'm going to inherit; even though my property isn't worth what it costs me, so much the worse for him! I've cursed this giant for seven years. I'll throw him out, if it takes seven years to punish him and to force him to go!"

"You're a queer boy," said the old shepherd. "How excited you get over it! I don't mind that. I see how you

loved your father, and that you have boldness and courage. We'll speak of your idea again. If I could help you, . . . but I'm too poor and too old."

"You can help me. Sell me your sledge-hammer."

"I'll loan it to you for nothing. I don't need it. It's heavy. Leave it on your place, for no one will go to steal it during the night. People are too afraid of the giant."

"People are afraid of him? I didn't know that. They know that he gets up at night and walks?"

"That's what they say. I don't believe it myself. I've served in Africa, that is to say I'm trained not to fear the cannons. I don't lower myself being afraid of stones."

"But I'm not afraid of them any more than you are, Father Bradat. I'm quite sure that this giant is a devil. It's on that account that I've made up my mind to make war on him, as you did on the Bedouins."

"Come now," said the old shepherd. "It shall be as you wish. It's late now. We must go to bed."

The next day, as I was starting to climb to my plateau, I heard him calling me. "Don't go so fast!" he said. "I want to go with you. I walk slowly but I get there just the same. I want to see this famous giant. I don't often climb up there, and I've never paid much attention to that great broken stone. It may be that I can give you some good advice."

When he had looked it all over: "There's ten times more work here than I thought," he said. "It isn't in two seasons that a dozen good laborers could clear that away. A great deal of powder would also be needed . . . If you take my advice, you'll give it up. You'd use up all your money, and you wouldn't be repaid for your trouble."

"Haven't you heard it said, Father Bradat, that the grass of this pasturage was the best on the mountain? My father repeated it so often that I believed it."

"I don't say it isn't. The little that still puts forth is of the best quality. But when you have cleared it, you'll have to have it enriched, and for that you'll need a flock. You'd have to have a large one right away, for the old enrichment is all gone. The pasturage would have to be begun with only the new soil. If you were quite well off, if you had four thousand francs, for instance . . ."

"I haven't the half of that."

"Then don't undertake it. It would be your ruin. What are those figures there on the cliff?"

"I invented them to calculate . . ."

"Oh, I understand. You don't know how to write?"

"Nor to read either."

"That's too bad. You must learn, for that would help you more than all the sledge-hammer blows on the stone."

"That's so! Would you be willing to teach me? . . ."

"I don't know much about it. But what I know is better than nothing, and when you want to begin I'm ready to help you."

I began that very evening, advancing an hour my return to Bradat's cabin. The biggest of the boys who worked for the old shepherd, seeing how eager I was to learn, also taught me. I must say that if he was less patient than the old man, he was a better reader. That's how I began to know enough to be in a position to try my hand alone. I soon carried a book with me, and while taking an hour's rest at mid-day, I studied hard with a determination as strong as that which bound me to the work of my inclosure.

Father Bradat, seeing that his prudent counsels had not changed my ideas, made up his mind not to try any more to discourage me. He merely laughed a little when I spoke of the giant as if it were a wicked devil. That made me more guarded. So from now on I only spoke of him as a heap of stones, without on that account giving up my ideas or my hatred. Father Bradat's lads felt a little as I did, that there was magic in these wretched rocks. They had heard it said on the other pasture-lands of the mountains, concerning other landslides which people had tried to dam up, that the demon had undone each night the work of the most skillful laborers. The boys sometimes came to watch me work, for I worked desperately. They ventured through friendship for me to lend me a hand. However, it wasn't without a touch of fear. One of them even, having dreamed of the giant, vowed he wouldn't touch it again. I didn't urge him. I knew very well that if I had wanted to treat them to wine on Sundays they would have been braver. But I didn't wish to turn them aside from their duty to Father Bradat. That would have been a poor payment for the hospitality he had granted me.

For all that, I didn't lack the companionship of one or another of the lads from time to time. Father Bradat was willing to keep me and feed me on condition that his goats fed on the small amount of grass which sprang up on my land. The child charged with looking after the goats amused himself building a quite strong hut to shelter himself from the rain. He used what was left of the old one, and much stone and brushwood which he disposed very skillfully. I thus had a resting-place for the night, and I made use of it many times, so that my work would go faster.

IV

EACH time I slept there I saw the giant, and each time I saw him more disturbed and more restless. It became clear to me that he felt he was being plagued to death. He grew feebler and more anxious to sneak off, but I believe also that he constantly became more foolish. Instead of going to sleep as I advised him to, he tried all sorts of impossible schemes. I tried to reason with him in his own interest and in mine, promising to leave him in peace when he was where I wanted him to be. He understood nothing, or he answered me with such rudeness that I was forced to beat him. As soon as he was beaten he gave way and began again to lay waste my prairie. Perceiving that there was no way to talk with this brute, I gave up the attempt. I let him commit his dull follies, which came to nothing, and often I went to sleep to the heavy sound of his uneven step. He became more and more lame. I saw clearly that the wisest thing for me to do was to go on breaking his feet. He would only go away in small pieces, when forced to do so.

I had been there for three months, and had become as strong as a young bull. I learned very quickly to read well enough to understand what I was reading. Father Bradat, who didn't grasp all the words and the ideas of his books, was surprised to have me explain them to him. My father, without teaching me anything, had told me a great deal. It soon came about that the dwellers in the cabin regarded me as a learned person. They considered me a deep one, and did not try any more to dissuade me from my plan. I made up my mind to speed up its completion by spending some money.

I went down the valley of Lesponne to hire workmen at the marble-quarries there. I found none at all. It was the height of the season at the resorts when foreigners keep everyone busy. Enormous wages were demanded. I managed to get a little powder, and returned consoled to think of the little party I was going to give Monsieur Yéous.

The next morning I hastened to get everything ready, after telling my hosts not to be astonished at the noise. I dug my little mine with whatever tools I could lay hands on. I didn't go about it badly at all, for I had watched the blasting along the mountain-roads. My heart beat with a cruel joy when I lighted the fuse. I had used all my powder; the explosion was a fine one and all but fatal to me, for I was too proud to take precautions. But the mouth of the giant split to the ears. He remained all agape with such an ugly grimace that I began to laugh, all bloody and wounded as I was. I was not badly hurt and got up right away. "Drink my blood!" I cried to my enemy, bending over his burned head. "Well, you see it's a duel to the death between us. You yourself can't bleed, but I hope you're suffering as you made my father suffer."

At this moment, I saw something which made me feel pity again. The explosion had brought havoc to a nest of ants settled in one of the giant's ears. These little people didn't busy themselves counting their dead or taking to flight. They bravely remounted into the ruins to carry away their larvae and place them in safety somewhere else. "Really, I beg your pardon," I told them. "I should have warned you. But I'm going to help you save your children." I took on my wooden shovel a big lump of this soil, full of little cells and galleries where the larvae lay, and carried it some distance. I then watched the clever ants who, after

having followed me, returned without going astray to do the rest of their moving. They informed each other, they certainly talked together, and they helped each other. No one seemed disheartened or discouraged. "Little ants," I said, "you're teaching me a big lesson! Even though my work should fall down on me, I'll not desert it."

But I was all alone, and I thought I must have help. I had not yet let my mother hear from me, although I wasn't far from where she was living. I was afraid and with reason that she would disapprove of my wasting my time in a wild scheme instead of hunting work. I began to worry over the anxiety she must feel and I went to see her.

She was very uneasy indeed, and scolded me when she found out I hadn't yet earned anything. But when she knew I had learned to read and had spent almost nothing, she was silent. She was forced to recognize that I hadn't been a tramp. Then I opened my heart; I told her how I had used my time and confided my hopes to her. She was very much surprised and very much touched, but also very much afraid. She spoke to me as Father Bradat had, and entreated me not to risk my money in such a doubtful enterprise. However, I had this advantage over her that she let me see her love for this nook of ground where she had been happier than anywhere else. She admitted that she often returned there in her dreams. I didn't want to seem too stubborn, hoping that perhaps in time I could persuade her. I promised her to turn the winter to account, for I must leave the heights very soon, and I kept my word. My season ended among the stones, I presented Father Bradat with a good hood of Barèges wool, and his lads with various little things bought according to their tastes. We parted good friends, with the promise to meet again the next year. I

went to seek my fortune in the direction of Lourdes, in the quarries and on the roads. I always had my idea in mind; I wanted to learn to fight the rock and to make myself master of it as quickly and as skillfully as possible. I only did common labor, but, while doing it, I watched the work of the engineers and tried to understand everything. I earned very little beyond my keep. This surplus I used to take lessons in arithmetic. In reading, I was getting along by myself slowly and with patience. As to writing I was learning it by copy-work. I used for all this one or two hours in the evening and almost all my Sundays. I was considered a fine big boy, more sensible than the average of my age, but in reality my only thought was to conquer the giant.

As soon as spring had melted the snows, I left for a hurried visit with my mother, and to buy a wheelbarrow, a pick, powder, an auger, a sledge-hammer, all that was needed to attack my enemy in the best possible fashion. I obtained from my mother the promise to give me another hundred francs when I had spent what I had left, if my work when inspected merited being encouraged. To make her decision in the matter she promised to come and see what I had done.

At Lourdes I hired two lads of my own age, who, having promised to meet me at Pierrefitte, turned up there on the given day. They were pleasant fellows, liking work and not at all badly behaved. Everything went well to start with. They weren't at all afraid of the giant Yéous. They didn't mind breaking in his ribs and widening his jaw. We built a larger and stronger cabin, the winter storms having destroyed the one I had. As Father Bradat went every week to buy supplies in the valleys, we charged him with buying and bringing ours up on his donkey.

As long as it was a question of making the rocks skip,

my companions were gay. But when the wheelbarrow had to be loaded and pushed along, they were seized with distaste. They were of the plain, and the mountains made them sad. I wasn't able to divert them from the boredom of the evenings and the vexing sound of the waterfalls. That which I thought so beautiful, in time they found mournful. One fine morning I saw that they were afraid. Afraid of what? They didn't want to say. Perhaps I had been unwise to talk too much sometimes about my hatred for the rock. I had said nothing of the giant's nightly appearances, which I often watched in silence while the others slept. It may be one of the boys had seen or heard something. However that was, they declared to me they had had enough of the solitude. They left good friends with me, but trying to persuade me to give up my task.

They didn't succeed. After having hired other fellows, who advanced the work a little more but without very evident results, I was again left alone under the pretense that I had undertaken a hopeless task. They said it was a kindness to leave me.

For the first time, I had an attack of discouragement. I couldn't sleep at night, and I saw the giant more whole, stronger, more alive than ever. He was seated on a block in the midst of other blocks which I had succeeded in separating out. The sky was a little overcast, and in the moonlight one would have said it was a shepherd guarding a flock of white elephants. I went to him; I succeeded in climbing on his knees. Catching hold of his beard, I raised myself up to his face which I slapped with my iron sledge-hammer. "Little shepherd," he said in his roaring voice, "go hunt another pasturage. This is mine forever"—and showing me

the scattered blocks—"you've given me these sheep; I mean to feed them at your expense until the end of time."

"We'll see about that," I answered. "You think you'll get the better of me because I'm alone. Well, I'll show you what one man can do by himself!"

The next day, I attacked the blocks with so much rage that, fifteen days later, the giant with only one sheep left tried again to get away. He took a step towards the dam where I intended to pen him up.

One Sunday my mother and my sisters came to see me. The spot was entirely cleared where my father had been crushed. The grass, since the water had been drained off by a ditch, grew there splendidly. Lovely blue columbines were reflected in the streamlet. I had set up a wooden cross on the very place of the accident, and I had made a stone seat. This touched my mother very much. She prayed and wept there, and, afterwards, looking over our little estate of which a good quarter was cleared and beautifully green, she declared she hadn't expected to see me so far along. But when, after resting a little, she went into the part most cluttered with waste, when she saw all that remained for me to do, she was dismayed and begged me to be content with what was already done. "You can," she said, "rent this bit of pasturage to your neighbors down below, now that it has a little value. That will be only a tiny return, but it's better than foolish spending."

I didn't give in. My mother became a little angry and threatened not to let me have any more money. Maguelonne, who was a big girl now, shed tears in my behalf. She took my part, she backed my idea. She wished she were a boy and strong enough to help me. To her mind there was nothing more beautiful than the heights. She vowed she would

never be married and settle down in a town. She had always remembered her mountain. It was there that she wanted to return as soon as she could manage it. Little Myrtle said nothing, but she opened her blue eyes and ran about the rocks like a partridge. She was drunk with the joy she felt and showed, but did not have the power of putting it into words.

I had got ready a little lunch of strawberries with Father Bradat's best cream. We ate together amid the ruins of our house. We were all touched—sad and happy at the same time. My mother left me without making any promises, but she embraced me tenderly and could not make up her mind to blame me. I worked along then until the end of the season. The more my task proceeded, the more I was sure of the trouble I would have carrying away this mountain of rubbish. I worked just that much harder. I no longer went down to the cabins except for a moment on Sunday. Since I had a kind of dwelling, I stayed there, and I put the evenings to good use, reading, writing and figuring. I had made, while digging in the ruins, a precious discovery. I had recovered intact an old chest which held various tools, some household utensils and my father's books. Although some of the pages were missing I read and re-read the books with great pleasure, not getting out of temper when they left me in the midst of an adventure. I would finish it out as I liked. They told of marvelous deeds which excited me and inflamed my courage. I did not find the solitude dull. I learned to figure out in ciphers the extent and the duration of my labor. I saw that I could finish it by myself in several years, and whatever anyone might say, I was determined to finish. The giant was so thoroughly in bits that he tried no more to collect his bones and walk about. He let me sleep in peace

except that from time to time I heard him complain in a voice like a bull who finds his pasture dull. I made him keep silence by threatening to use powder, for I knew this was what he hated the most. Then he complained no more. I saw clearly that he was vanquished and felt himself entirely in my power.

When winter came, I did the same work as the year before, but I earned more. I was already seventeen years old; I had grown and developed the finest sort of muscles. In spite of my youth, I was paid like a grown man. One of the gentlemen who was directing the work noticed me. He maintained that I was more intelligent, more persevering than the others, and took a liking to me. From then on, he always entrusted to me the work which would teach me the most. He saved me money by giving me a place at his lodgings and at his table. So when spring came I had spent almost nothing. He was leaving the country and wanted to take me along as man-servant and comrade, promising that he would help me advance in his employ. But nothing could determine me to abandon my property. I went back there as soon as the snow permitted me to set foot on the mountain.

V

EVERYTHING was now broken up, and I only had the work with the wheelbarrow left to do. It wasn't hard, but it was the most uninteresting. I spent all this season there, the following one, and the next after that, also. Finally, one fine morning at the end of the fifth year, I saw all the disjointed body of the giant carried onto the torn side of the mountain. It formed a fine dam capable of holding back the ice of the

most severe winter, with all the sand the ice brings down with it. The ice, encountering a support, tended to pile up and increase the strength of the dam. My prairie, which I had drained with stone ditches as I cleared the ground, carried all its streamlets towards the torrent. There was no need of enrichment to produce magnificent grass. There were almost too many flowers, and it was a real garden. The goats came here no more, for after the second year I had planted beech-trees like those the landslide had destroyed. My saplings were already hardy and quite leafy. Day by day, also, I had pulled up the ferns and other wild plants which invaded my domain. I burned them, and the ashes destroyed the moss. I was at my last barrowful, perhaps the four thousandth, when I stopped and left it where it was. I wished to give my sister Maguelonne the pleasure of carrying it away, so that she could say she had laid hand last of all to the work.

Then I knelt on the sunny side to thank God for the courage he had given me and for the health I had been granted to bring to a successful ending this task. I had been told it would take all the lifetime of a man, and I was now only twenty-one years old. I was of age, and the work was done. I had before me all my manhood to enjoy my property and to gather the fruits of my labor.

The sun set in a glory of golden rays and purple clouds. It was like a great eye in the heavens which looked at me and smiled. The snows of the peak shone like diamonds, the cascade sang like a chorus of nymphs. A light wind touched the flowers, who seemed to kiss my land tenderly. The monster who had vexed me so much was no longer to be seen. He was silenced forever. Already partly covered with grass, moss and clematis, which had begun to grow when I ceased

passing back and forth, he no longer had the form of a giant. He was not ugly any more.

I was so happy that I wanted to forgive him. Turning to him, I said: "Now, you can sleep all day and all night without my troubling you. The evil spirit which was in you is conquered; I forbid it to return. I've freed you from it by forcing you to become of some use. May the lightning spare you and the snow press lightly upon you!"

I thought I heard passing along the length of the slope a sound like a great sigh of resignation which lost itself in the heights. This was the last time I heard the voice of the giant.

The next morning, I got ready for the little party I wanted to give. I invited Father Bradat, who had always been a good neighbor and a good friend to me, to come to my place about noon with all his lads and all his animals. I wanted to give his sheep the first taste of my meadow. Then I hurried to Pierrefitte to get my mother and my sisters.

"Here I am," I told them. "I've finished, and I haven't spent any of the money you were keeping for me when I came of age. I'll need it now to buy a flock and build a real cottage. But I intend that we four shall own everything together until the day when my sisters want to marry. Then we'll divide everything into equal parts. Now, come; I've a carriage and a horse here to take you to the foot of the mountain, with some supplies for the breakfast. I want you to place the bouquet on Miquelon's holding."

When they entered our little valley, they thought they were dreaming. The camp-stove was set up and sent off into the air its long thread of blue smoke. Father Bradat, aided by some women and girls of the region roundabout, whom

I had invited as I went by, was getting the meal ready. There were mountain partridges, which are quite white in the wintertime, grouse and cream cheeses. I brought wine, sugar, coffee and new bread. Bradat's flock was scattered about on my pasturage and attacked it with appetite as if to show that it was good. The lads set up the table and made seats of fir logs and planks newly cut. The table, covered with leaves and flowers, had a festive air. The bouquet of rhododendrons and wild pinks was hung on a cord to be raised by my mother onto a pole. I was surprised, myself, at the music which I hadn't dreamed of having. Father Bradat had asked one of his friends, who owned a dulcimer, to come and play for us to dance. After the breakfast we had a ball, my sisters dancing with great spirit. My poor mother wept with joy when she raised the bouquet, while Mague-lonne covered herself with glory lifting briskly the last barrowful and throwing it onto the pile. Everyone was gay; hence friendly and good-natured. No one got tipsy, for we mountaineers are sober and well-mannered, as you know.

When evening came I saw my family home. My mother praised me and handed over the money to build the house you see and to buy cattle. She consented to live with me summers; my sisters would be overjoyed to do so.

The next year, just as we were ready to move up, we had a great anxiety. My mother became ill, and we thought we were going to lose her. But as soon as she was out of danger, she asked to be carried to our mountain, where the good air soon cured her. If you don't see her with us today, it is because the good woman, who doesn't find enough to do here and always wants to earn money for us, is at Caunterets. There she washes and irons the dainty garments of the ladies, not to speak of the fine shirts of the elegant gentle-

men. She's in great demand because of her excellent work and her pleasant manners. As for us, you see how well off we are here. We're always sorry when our summer season is over, and we're always glad to move up here the first fine days. Hunting is good; there's plenty of game. Monsieur Bear, when he ventures in our direction, is well received in the larder. The wolves bothered us a little at first, but they've had their lesson and don't forget it. Our plateau is now better than it's ever been. I've made a fine thing with my fat cows, which I go each autumn to sell in the lowlands, then buying lean ones in the spring. I've thus been able to double my piece of ground by buying the parcel at the side. It had been left to run wild, and I didn't have to pay much for it. Now it's worth as much as the rest, and the coming year I'm going to double my flock, which is my little fortune.

"That's my story, my dear guest," said Miquelon in conclusion. "If it's bored you, I ask your pardon for it. I was a little nervous at first for fear of not being taken seriously, and then because of the earnestness with which you listened to me."

"Miquel," I replied, "do you know what I was thinking while I mentally reckoned the number of your sledge-hammer blows and your barrowfuls of stone? First I regretted that a man of your worth hadn't been called by fate to exercise his will to succeed on a larger field of action. Then I thought to myself that, whatever may be the field of action, we are all breakers of stone, more or less strong and patient. The man able to reconquer his property, as you have done, is out of the ordinary. What strikes me the most in your story is not merely the stubbornness of the peasant, which is, however, worthy of respect. It is that you were inspired by a feeling higher than self-interest; by filial love

and the struggle to make the soil fertile, seen as a duty of man."

"I thank you for what you've said," replied Miquelon. "There was all that, but there was also something you ought to find fault with, the belief in evil spirits in nature."

"Oh, you don't believe in them any more. I know it very well."

"That's right! You read me like a book. I was a child fed on dreams and subject to false beliefs. . . . And then I didn't grasp the real meaning of religious faith. I've read since; I've come to see there's but one God, and that Zeus or Jupiter was only one of his names. The thunder in the clouds holds no grudge against the rock which is struck. The rock which gives way bears no ill-will to the poor man it crushes. You'll see tomorrow, on top of my dam, where the soil is heaped up and enriched, that I've planted a sort of little sacred wood of wild anemones. This is to show my respect for the laws of nature, which the ancient gods represented."

I spent a very comfortable night under Miquelon's roof. I only awaited the rising of the sun to go out of doors. Miquelon was already in his cattle-shed, but guessing that I liked to be left alone a little, he let me wander about at will. I found beautiful plant-specimens, anemones, primroses, and various rare and charming varieties of saxifrage. But I chiefly examined the giant, this monument which should have been dedicated to the divinity which performs real miracles for man—patience. I made there a very good collection of moss; I regarded the clever works of the ants, and the little spiders' skillful and persevering hunt. I should have liked out of curiosity to hear for a moment the death-rattle of the giant. But I only heard the musical and fresh

voice of a charming cascade which fell close by. Its waters, well directed by Miquelon's efforts, caressed the prairie, singing a very gay song.

Miquelon gave me another good meal and sent me back on my way along pleasant trails. He wished to accept in return for his hospitality nothing more than the seeds of wild flowers I had gathered on other mountains. When I told him that one of the joys of the botanist was to sow in different places beautiful and rare plants, to preserve the varieties and reward the quests of other botanists, he seemed touched and impressed by this idea. He was determined henceforth to follow my example in his tramps. He had, as do all mountaineers in touch with amateurs and tourists, some notion of natural history. He wanted to take me to his home in Pierrefitte to give me specimens of plants and minerals, beautiful crystals picked up on the giant himself, and flowers gathered close by the glaciers. "Isn't it true," he said, "that our mountains are the botanist's paradise? You have at the same time the flowers and fruits of all the seasons. At the lower end of the valleys, it's summer and autumn. You climb halfway up, and you find spring. Still higher, you are back amid the flowers blossoming elsewhere early in March. Thus you can collect on the same day the orchids of early spring and those which blossom in autumn. It's that way also for the air and the light. You have in one day, in proportion as you climb, the glitter of the sun on the lakes, the autumn haze on the high prairies, and the majesty of the winters on the summits. How could one tire of the sight of the most beautiful things in creation thus brought together? Such riches are well worth buying by seven months' exile in the plain. That's why we love our mountain so much and pardon it for driving us out each year.

We understand that the mountain belongs to some power which is more important than we are. We must content ourselves with the beautiful smiles it gives us when we return."

Miquelon wanted to lodge me and serve me at Pierrefitte. I was ashamed to be so loaded with favors by a man for whom I had done so little. "Do you remember," he said when we parted, "that you said to my father before me: 'This child mustn't beg any longer. He has in his eyes something which promises better than that.' I cherished your words in my heart, and who knows if I don't owe to you my having wished to be a man?"

The Castle of Pictordu



TO MY GRANDDAUGHTER

AURORE SAND

The question is to know if there are fairies, or not. You are at an age when one loves the marvelous, and I would be pleased if the marvelous for you might be in nature which you also love.

As for me, I think there are fairies. If I did not think so, I would not tell you about them.

It remains to find out where these beings, called supernatural, spirits and fairies, may be found; where they come from and where they go, the influence they have over us and where they lead us. Many grown-ups do not know this very well. That is why I want to have them read the stories I tell you to put you to sleep.

The Castle of Pictordu

I

THE TALKING STATUE

IT WAS in the very depths of a wild region called, once upon a time, the province of the Gévaudan. There all alone, in its wilderness of forests and mountains, is the deserted Castle of Pictordu. It was sad, oh, so sad; it had an air of boredom like a person who, after having received a great company and given fine fêtes, sees himself perishing, feeble and alone.

The good Monsieur Flochardet, a painter famous in the south of France, was traveling in a postchaise on the road which runs along the little river. He had with him his only daughter, Diana, eight years old, whom he had gone to fetch from the Convent of the Visitandines of Mende. He was bringing her back home, because of a fever which for about three months had attacked the child one day out of every two. The doctor had advised the air of her birthplace, and Flochardet was conducting her to a pretty villa which he owned on the outskirts of Arles.

Having left Mende the day before, father and daughter went out of their way to go to see a relative, and they must lodge that night at Saint-Jean-du-Gard.

This was a long time before there were railroads, and in all respects the pace was slower than nowadays. The travelers were not expecting to reach their home before the day after the morrow. Their progress was more slow because

the road was very bad. Monsieur Flochardet had got out to walk by the side of the postilion.

"What is that in front of us?" he asked, "is it a ruin or a bank of whitish rocks?"

"What, sir," said the postilion, "you do not recognize the Castle of Pictordu?"

"I couldn't recognize it; I'm seeing it for the first time. I've never taken this route before, and I'll never take it again. The road is frightful, and we're not getting ahead at all."

"Patience, sir. This old route is more direct than the new one. You would still have seven leagues to travel before the night's lodging-place, if you had taken the other. This way, you have no more than two."

"But if we put in five hours reaching the end of the road, I don't see what I'll have gained this way."

"You're joking, sir. In two short hours we'll be at Saint-Jean-Gardonnenque."

Monsieur Flochardet sighed as he thought of his little Diana. It was the day of her attack of fever. He had hoped to arrive at the inn before the time, and put her to bed for rest and warmth. The air of the ravine was damp, the sun had set. He feared that she might be seriously ill if she had to shiver with fever in the chill night-air, the coach jolting along the old road.

"Oh," he said to the postilion, "this is now an abandoned route?"

"Yes, sir; it's a road which was made for the castle, and the castle having been abandoned. . . ."

"It seems to me still to be very fine and very extensive. Why does no one live there any more?"

"Because the owner who inherited it at the time it

began to fall into ruin doesn't have the money to have it repaired. It belonged formerly to a rich lord who wasted money there—balls, comedies, games, banquets, what not? He ruined himself for it; his descendants haven't got over it, no more than the castle. It still has a noble appearance, but one of these days it will fall from up there down into the river and onto the road we're taking."

"Provided it lets us pass by this evening, then it may fall to pieces, if it sees fit! But why this strange name of Pictordu?"

"Because of that rock which you see rising from the wood above the castle. It's as if twisted by fire. They say that, in olden times, all the countryside burned. It's called a volcanic region. You've never seen the likes of it, I'll wager."

"Yes, I've seen many like it, but that doesn't interest me for the moment. I beg of you, my friend, get on your horse again and go on as quickly as possible."

"Excuse me, sir, not yet. We have to pass the reservoir of the cascades of the park. There's hardly any water left but there's a good deal of rubbish, and I must drive my horses carefully. Don't be afraid for the little lady. There's no danger."

"That may be so," answered Flochardet, "but I prefer to take her in my arms; you'll give me notice."

"We're there now, sir, do as you choose."

The painter had the carriage stopped, and lifted out little Diana, who was drowsy and commencing to feel uncomfortable from fever.

"Go up those stairs," said the postilion. "You can cross the terrace and reach the bend of the road at the same time I do."

Flochardet went up the steps, his daughter in his arms. It was, in spite of its ruined condition, a truly lordly staircase, with what had been a very beautiful balustrade. There were some exquisite statues still standing here and there. The terrace, formerly paved with flagstones, had become like a botanical garden of wild plants, sprung up amid the stones, and mingled with some rarer shrubs, formerly planted in baskets. Purple-colored honeysuckles clung to enormous tufts of eglantine; jasmines blossomed amid the briers; cedars of Lebanon rose above native fir-trees and rustic ever-green oaks. Ivy stretched itself out like carpet or hung in garlands; strawberry plants, set on the steps, traced designs as far as the base of the statues. This overgrown terrace had never perhaps been so beautiful, but Flochardet was a painter of the fashionable world, and did not love nature greatly. Moreover, all this wealth of plants made walking difficult in the twilight. He feared the thorns for the sake of his daughter's pretty face, and advanced protecting her as well as he could, when he heard below a noise of horseshoes resounding on the stones, and the voice of the postilion who cried out as if some accident had befallen him.

What was to be done? How could he rush to give assistance with a sick child in his arms? Little Diana freed him from his difficulty by her sweetness and her good judgment. The cries of the postilion had fully aroused her, and she understood that this poor man must be delivered from some danger.

"Go, papa, run," she said to her father. "I'm quite all right here. The garden is very pretty; I love it dearly. Leave me your cloak. I'll wait for you without stirring. You'll find me here, at the foot of this big vase; never fear."

Flochardet wrapped her in his cloak, and ran to see what had happened. The postilion was not hurt at all, but, in trying to get through the ruins, he had upset the carriage, two wheels of which were entirely broken to pieces. One of the horses had fallen and hurt its knees. The postilion was in despair. One was bound to feel sorry for him, but Flochardet could not keep from being angry. What was going to become of him at nightfall with a little girl too heavy to carry over two leagues of countryside; that is to say, for a three-hour tramp? There was nothing else to do, however. He left the postilion to disentangle himself all alone, and went back to get Diana.

But, instead of finding her asleep at the foot of the big vase as he expected, he saw her coming to meet him, wide awake and almost gay.

"Papa," she said to him, "I heard everything from the edge of the terrace. The coachman isn't hurt, but the horses are injured, and the carriage is broken. We'll not be able to go farther this evening, and I was grieving because of your anxiety, when the lady called me by my name. I lifted my head and I saw that she'd stretched out her arm towards the castle. It was to tell me to enter there. Let's go; I'm sure she'll be glad, and we'll be very comfortable at her house."

"What lady are you talking about, child? This castle is deserted, and I see no one about here."

"You don't see the lady? That's because it's getting dark; but I can still see her very well. She's all the while showing us the door through which we must enter her house."

Flochardet looked at what Diana was pointing out to him. It was a life-size statue, representing an allegorical figure, Hospitality perhaps, which, with an elegant and

gracious gesture, seemed actually to point out to the new arrivals the entrance of the castle.

"What you take to be a lady is a statue," he said to his daughter, "and you dreamed she spoke to you."

"No, papa, I haven't dreamed. We must do as she wishes."

Flochardet was not inclined to disappoint the sick child. He cast a glance at the rich façade of the castle. With its ornament of creepers clinging to the balconies and to the cut-out work of the carved stone, it still appeared magnificent and strong.

"After all," he said to himself, "it's a shelter, lacking a better one, and I'll certainly find a corner where the child can lie down while I consider what to do."

He went in with Diana, who took him resolutely by the hand, under a stately peristyle. Going straight ahead, they entered a great room which was only, to tell the truth, a garden-plot of wild mint and of horehound with whitish leaves, inclosed by columns more than one of which lay on the ground. The others held up what was left of a cupola open to the sky in a thousand places. This ruin did not appear very inviting to Flochardet, and he was about to retrace his steps, when the postilion came to rejoin him.

"Follow me, sir," he said, "in this direction there's a wing still in good condition, where you may pass the night very comfortably."

"We must pass the night here? Is there no way to get to, if not the town, at least some farm or country-house?"

"Impossible, sir, unless your luggage is left in the carriage, which cannot go farther."

"It isn't difficult to take my baggage, which doesn't amount to much, out of the carriage, and to load it on one

of your horses. I can ride the other with my daughter, and you can show us the way to the nearest dwelling."

"There's no house that we could reach tonight. The mountain is too steep, and my poor horses are worn out, both of them. I don't know how we'll get away from here, even in full daylight. Anyhow, the most pressing thing is to put the little lady to bed. I'm going to find you a room where there are still doors and window-shutters, and where the ceiling will not fall in. As for me, I've found a sort of stable for my animals, and I have my little sack of oats for them. You have some provisions for yourself so we'll not die of want this evening. I'm going to bring all your things and the cushions of the carriage to sleep on. One night is soon over."

"Oh, well," said Flochardet, "do as you think best, as long as you've recovered your spirits. You probably know the caretaker and can get his permission to stay here."

"There's no caretaker. The Castle of Pictordu looks after itself. In the first place, there's nothing to steal. Then . . . but I'll tell you that later. Here we are at the door of the old bathing-place. I know how it's opened. Enter, sir; there are no rats, nor screech owls, nor snakes. Wait for me and don't be afraid of anything."

While talking they passed many buildings more or less in ruin, and came to a sort of low pavilion, of a noble style. It was, like the rest of the castle, an edifice of the time of the Renaissance. While the façade presented a mixture of different styles of architecture, this pavilion, placed in a court, was on a small scale an imitation of the Roman baths. The interior was quite well inclosed and in reasonably good repair.

The postilion had carried in one of the carriage-lanterns

with its candle. He struck a light, and Flochardet was able to assure himself that the lodging-place was a possible one. He seated himself on the base of a column intending to hold Diana on his lap, while the postilion went to get the cushions and the luggage.

"No, thank you, papa," she said. "I'm very glad to spend the night in this pretty castle. Here, I don't feel sick any more. Do go and help the postilion, so that things will be done more quickly. I'm sure that you're hungry. As for me, I believe I'll enjoy the cakes and fruit you put into a little basket for me."

Flochardet, seeing his little sick girl so brave, put her down. In a quarter of an hour, the cushions, cloaks, trunks, basket; in short, all that the carriage contained, was carried into the bathing-place of the old manor-house. Diana did not forget her doll, whose arm had been broken in the accident. She wanted to cry, but seeing that some of her father's more valuable possessions were also broken, she had the courage not to complain.

"Come, now," said Flochardet to the postilion, "since after all you've found us a lodging and shown yourself devoted to our service . . . What's your name?"

"Romanèche, sir."

"Well, Romanèche, you shall sup with me, and sleep in this big room, if it pleases you."

"No, sir; I'll go groom and care for my horses, but a glass of wine isn't to be refused after a mishap. Moreover, I'll wait on you. The little lady will want some water. I know where the spring is. I'll fix her bed for her. I know how to care for children, for I've some of my own!"

Thus speaking, the good Romanèche arranged everything. The supper was a cold fowl, a loaf of bread, a ham

and some dainties which Diana nibbled at with pleasure. There were neither chairs nor table, but, in the center of the room, a marble fish-pond made a little amphitheater with steps where one could sit at ease. The spring, formerly feeding the bath, still gushed out and furnished excellent water which Diana drank from her little silver goblet.

While eating, the painter noticed his daughter. She was gay and would willingly have prattled instead of sleeping. But when she was no longer hungry, he persuaded her to lie down. A very tolerable couch was made with the cushions and the cloaks, in a marble trough on the edge of the fish-pond. The weather was superb; it was midsummer and the moon began to come up. Moreover, there was still one candle left, and the place was not at all gloomy. The interior had been painted in fresco. There were still birds in flight amid the garlands of the ceiling, trying to catch butterflies larger than themselves. On the walls nymphs danced in a ring, holding each other by the hand. This one lacked a leg, another one hands or head. Stretched out on her bed, with her doll in her arms, Diana lay quiet, waiting to fall asleep, and regarded the crippled dancers. In spite of everything she thought them very gay.

II

THE VEILED LADY

WHILE the postilion Romanèche, transformed into a valet, put in order what was left of the supper, Monsieur Flochardet, thinking his daughter asleep, said:

“Tell me now why this castle takes care of itself. You’ve given me to understand there is a special reason.”

Romanèche hesitated a moment, but the good wine of his courteous passenger had put him in the mood for talking.

"You're going to make fun of me, sir; I'm sure of it. You educated people don't believe in certain things."

"Come, I'm listening to you, my good man. I don't believe in the supernatural, I admit that. But I love strange stories. This castle must have its legend. Tell it to me and I'll not laugh."

"Well, here's what it is, sir. I told you the Castle of Pictordu guarded itself; that was so to speak. It's guarded by the veiled lady."

"And the veiled lady, who is she?"

"Oh! that's what no one knows. Some say it's a living person who dresses in the old style; others that it's the ghost of a princess who lived a long time ago, and comes back here every night."

"We'll have the pleasure of seeing her, then?"

"No, sir, you'll not see her. She's a very polite lady who wishes people to come into her house properly. Sometimes she even invites the passers-by to come in, and if they pay no attention she makes their carriages overturn or their horses fall down. If they're on foot, she has so many stones rolled down on the road they can go no farther. She must have called out from the top of the keep or from the terrace some word of invitation we didn't hear; for, say what you please, the accident which happened to us isn't natural. If you'd persisted in continuing on your way, something worse would have happened to us."

"Oh, so that's it! I understand now why you found it impossible to guide us somewhere else."

"Yes, and even in the town, you'd have been more un-

comfortable, less well-off, except that the supper might have been better. I myself found it, for all that, very good!"

"It's been quite all right, and I'm not sorry to be here. But I'd like to know all about the veiled lady. When one comes into her house without being invited, she must be displeased."

"She's not angry and does not show herself. She's never seen; no one has ever seen her. She's not ill-natured and has never harmed people. But you hear a voice which calls out to you: *go away!* and whether you wish it or not, you feel forced to obey, as if forty pairs of horses were dragging you."

"Then, this can very well happen to us, for she hasn't invited us at all."

"Pardon me, sir, I'm sure she must have called us, but we didn't pay attention."

Flochardet remembered then that little Diana believed she had been invited by the statue on the terrace.

"Speak lower," he said to the postilion, "this child dreamed something like that, and she shouldn't believe in such foolishness."

"Oh!" exclaimed Romanèche, "she heard! . . . That's it, sir. The veiled lady adores children. When she saw that you were passing without noticing her invitation, she upset the carriage."

"And hurt the horses? It's a mean trick for a person so hospitable!"

"To tell you the truth, sir, my horses aren't much hurt; a little blood and that's all. It was the carriage she had a grudge against. But if it can be mended tomorrow or another obtained for you, you'll only be delayed a few hours in your journey, since you'd have had to pass the night at Saint-Jean-

Gardonenque. Perhaps you're expected somewhere, and are afraid of alarming the people by not arriving on a certain day?"

"Surely," answered Flochardet, who feared a little the unruffled lack of concern of the honest man or his too great obedience to some new notion of the veiled woman. "The first thing in the morning we must busy ourselves making up the lost time."

The fact is that Flochardet was not expected home on any fixed day. His wife did not know that Diana was ill at the convent, and did not expect to see her before vacation.

"Come," said Flochardet to Romanèche, "it's bedtime. Do you want to sleep here? I'm willing, if it's more comfortable here than with your horses."

"Thank you, sir, it's very kind of you," answered Romanèche, "but I can only sleep when I'm with them. Each man to his taste. You're not afraid to stay alone with the little girl?"

"Afraid? No, since I'll not see the lady. By the way, could you tell me why it's known she's veiled, since no one has ever seen her?"

"I don't know, sir; it's an old story. I didn't make it up. I believe in it without bothering myself about it. I'm not a coward, and I haven't done anything to displease the spirit of the castle."

"Well, a good night's rest to you," said Flochardet, "be here at daybreak, never fail. Serve us quickly and well, and you'll not be sorry."

Flochardet, left alone with Diana, went to her and touched her cheeks and little hands. He was surprised and happy to find them cool. He tried to feel her pulse, although

he did not know much about fever. Diana gave him a kiss, saying:

"Don't worry, daddy, I'm quite all right. It's my doll who has fever; don't disturb her."

Diana was very sweet and loving; she never complained. But she looked so quiet and happy that her father brightened up.

"She had her attack a little while ago," he thought. "She was wandering when she believed she heard a statue talk. But the attack was very short and perhaps the change of air has been sufficient to cure it. It may be the convent life does not agree with her. I'll keep her with us, and my wife will certainly not be sorry for it."

Flochardet wrapped himself up as well as he could. He stretched out on the steps of the fish-pool beside the child and was not slow in going to sleep, as befitted a man still young and in good health.

Monsieur Flochardet was not more than forty years old. He had a handsome face, was amiable, rich, well-brought-up, and a very pleasing, elegant person. He had made a good deal of money painting portraits, finely finished and very fresh, which the ladies found a good likeness because they were always pictured as beautiful and young. To tell the truth, all Flochardet's portraits were alike. He had in his head a very pretty type which he painted again and again, modifying it very little. He only endeavored to render faithfully the dress and the hair of his models. These details were the only original traits of the figures. He excelled in imitating the shade of a dress, the movement of a ringlet of hair, the airiness of a ribbon. There were certain of these portraits which could be recognized immediately by the cushions or the parrots placed by the side of the model. He was

not without talent. He even had a great deal of talent in his line. As for originality, genius, the perception of life as it really was, these were things which must not be demanded of him. But then he was an undisputed success, and the elegant bourgeoisie preferred him to a great master who would have had the impertinence to reproduce a wart or show a wrinkle.

After two years of widowerhood he had married as his second wife a young lady, poor, but of good family, who considered him the greatest artist of the universe. She was not at all foolish naturally, but she was so pretty, so very pretty, that she had never found time to reflect and to improve herself. She had shrunk from the task of herself raising her husband's daughter. That is why she had had him place the child in the convent, with the thought that as an only daughter she would thrive better with some little companions than at home. She herself would not have been able to play with Diana and amuse her, or if she could have, she would not have found the time for it. It took a good deal of time to dress herself ten times a day, and be always more beautiful.

Flochardet was a good father and husband. He found indeed that Madame Flochardet was a little frivolous, but it was to please him that she decked herself out all day. It was also, she said, for the purpose of enabling him to study feminine attire, which he turned to good account in his painting.

While falling asleep in the fish-pool of the old manor, Flochardet thought of these things, of the dresses and the beauty of his wife, of his sick daughter, perhaps already cured, of his rich clients, of the work which he was anxious to take up again. He thought of the accident to the carriage, of the strange coincidence of the postilion's queer story with

little Diana's account of the veiled lady, and of the need which country people experience of believing in marvelous things, even when fear is not the cause of these dreams. While he mused thus he fell deeply asleep and even snored a little.

Diana also slept, didn't she? Well, I confess that I don't know anything about it. I've told you of her father and stepmother. I've wandered off the track at the risk of putting you out of patience, because you must know why Diana was always quiet and dreamy. She had passed her babyhood all alone with her nurse who adored her, but who talked very little. She herself had been obliged to set in order in her little head, as well as she could, the ideas which came to her. You'll not be too much surprised, then, at what I'll in course of time tell you about her. For the moment, I must relate how her spirit was awakened and fashioned in the Castle of Pictordu.

When she heard her father snore, she opened her eyes and looked about. It was dark in the great round room. The vault was not high and as one of the lanterns of the carriage still gave out a dim and wavering light, Diana could see one or two of the antique dancers who chanced to be placed in front of her. The best preserved and at the same time the most injured was a tall person whose greenish robe had a certain freshness. Her bare arms and legs were well drawn, but her face, affected by the dampness, had entirely disappeared. Diana, half-asleep, had vaguely heard what the postilion told Monsieur Flochardet concerning the veiled lady. Little by little, she commenced thinking that this form without a face must have some connection with the legend of the castle.

"I don't know," she thought, "why my papa calls that

foolishness. I'm quite sure, myself, that lady spoke to me on the terrace, and in a very sweet pretty voice, too. I'd be glad if she still wanted to talk to me. And if I wasn't afraid to displease papa who always thinks me sick, I'd certainly go to see if she's still there."

Scarcely did she have this thought when the lantern went out, and she perceived a great beautiful light, blue like the moon, cross the room. In this ray of soft light she saw the antique dancer leave the wall and come towards her.

Don't think at all that Diana was afraid. It was an exquisite figure. The dress of the dancer formed a thousand graceful folds on her beautiful form and seemed sowed with silver spangles. A girdle of precious stones held the widths of her light tunic. A veil of sparkling gauze was wound about her hair which escaped in blond tresses on her shoulders, white as snow. Her face could not be seen through the gauze, but from it came two pale rays in place of eyes. Her bare limbs and her arms, uncovered to the shoulder, were of a perfect beauty. At last the vague and dim nymph of the wall was become a living person, absolutely lovely to look upon.

She came very close to the child. Without glancing at the father, she bent over Diana's forehead and planted there a kiss. That is to say, Diana heard the soft noise of her lips but felt nothing. The little girl threw her arms around the neck of the lady to return the caress and to hold her fast, but it was only a shadow she embraced.

"Then you're made entirely of mist," she said, "since I don't feel you? Please speak to me, so that I may know if it was you who spoke to me before."

"It was I," answered the lady, "would you like to come and take a walk with me?"

"I'd love to, but take away the fever, so that my papa won't be worried any more."

"Never fear, with me you'll not have any ill. Give me your hand."

The child held out her hand trustfully, and, although she did not feel that of the fairy, it seemed to her an agreeable coolness passed through all her being.

They went out from the room together.

"Where do you want to go?" said the lady.

"Wherever you please," answered the little girl.

"Would you like to go back to the terrace?"

"The terrace seemed to me very pretty with all its bushes and its tall grass full of little flowers."

"Don't you want to see the interior of my castle, which is still more beautiful?"

"It's all open and all destroyed."

"You've been deceived. It seems like that to those whom I don't permit to see it."

"You'll let me see it, me?"

"Certainly. Look!"

Immediately the ruins in the midst of which Diana believed herself to be were replaced by a beautiful corridor, its ceilings gilded in relief. Between each great arch, chandeliers ornamented with drops of crystal sparkled, and great beautiful figures of black marble, bearing torches, reared themselves in the recesses. Other statues, some of bronze, others of white marble or of jasper, others all gilded over, appeared on their richly carved pedestals. A pavement of mosaic representing flowers and birds, oddly arranged, extended as far as the eye could reach beneath the footsteps of the little traveler. At the same time, the sounds of distant music made themselves heard. Diana, who adored music,

began dancing, for she did not doubt in the least that the fairy was taking her to the ball.

"So you're very fond of dancing?" asked the fairy.

"No," answered Diana, "I've never learned to dance, and my legs feel too weak. But I love to see everything pretty. I'd like to see you all dance in a circle again, as I saw you in the picture."

They came to a great drawing-room all filled with mirrors brightly lighted, and the fairy disappeared. But at once Diana saw a multitude of people like her, in green robes and gauze veils. They skipped lightly by the hundreds in all the great mirrors, to the sound of an unseen orchestra. Diana was greatly entertained watching this round, until her eyes grew tired and it seemed to her that she was sleeping. She thought she was awakened by the cool hand of the fairy and she found herself in another room still more beautiful and rich, in the center of which was a table of massive gold, of a very handsome shape, loaded with dainties. The rare fruits, flowers, cakes and bonbons mounted to the ceiling.

"Take what you wish," the fairy told her.

"I don't care for anything," Diana answered, "unless it's some very cold water. I'm warm as if I had been dancing."

The fairy breathed on her through her veil, and Diana felt herself rested and her thirst quenched.

"Now you're comfortable. What do you want to see next?"

"All that you wish me to see."

"Haven't you any choice?"

"Will you show me the gods?"

The fairy did not seem surprised at this request. Diana had once owned an old book of mythology with very ugly pictures in it. They seemed very beautiful at first but had

ended by provoking her. She dreamed of seeing something better, and thought that the fairy might have some lovely images. Diana was led into a room where there were paintings representing the personages of mythology, life-size. She looked at them, first in surprise and then with the desire to see them move.

"Make them come close to us," she said to the fairy.

Straightway all these gods stepped from their frames and began to walk about; then to mount very high and to whirl to the ceiling like birds which pursue one another. They went so fast that Diana could not see them any longer. She recognized some she had loved in her book, graceful Hebe with her cup, proud Juno with her peacock, elegant Mercury with his little hat, Flora with all her garlands. But all this movement tired her again.

"It's too warm at your house," she said to the fairy, "take me into your garden."

Instantly she found herself on the terrace; but this was not the uncultivated and wild place she had crossed to enter the castle. It was a flower-garden with paths sanded with little pebbles of different colors like mosaic. There were baskets where a thousand designs were traced in flowers, like a rich carpet. The statues sang a lovely hymn in honor of the moon, and Diana longed to see the goddess whose name had been given her. This deity soon appeared in the form of a silvery cloud in the sky. She was tall, very tall, and held a brightly shining bow. Sometimes she became smaller, and then again so tiny that one would have called her a swallow. Finally, she came near again and grew large. Diana tired of following her with the eye, and said to the fairy:

"Now, I want to kiss you."

"That is to say, you want to go to sleep," said the fairy

taking her into her arms. "Well, sweet dreams; but when you wake up, don't forget anything I've shown you."

Diana fell soundly asleep, and, when she opened her eyes, she found herself lying in the marble trough, holding in her hand the tiny head of her doll. The bluish dawn had replaced the blue moon. Monsieur Flochardet was up and had opened his dressing-case. He was calmly shaving, for, at that time, a man of the world, in whatever situation he found himself, would have been ashamed not to be freshly shaven in the morning.

III

MADemoiselle de PICTORDU

DIANA got up and put on her shoes which she had taken off before she went to sleep. She fastened up again the clasps of her dress and begged her father to loan her his mirror so that she could freshen up a bit while he went with Romanèche to look at the carriage. Flochardet knowing that she was neat and careful, left her to herself. He told her, if she went out, not to go into the ruins of the castle without looking carefully where she walked.

Diana made her toilet and put back very carefully all the fittings of the dressing-case. As her father had not returned, she went to ramble in the castle, hoping to find again all the beautiful things the fairy had shown her during the night. But she could not even find where they had been. The winding staircases were broken, and the upper rooms had fallen in on the ones beneath. It was not possible to know what had been the arrangement of the separate buildings. It was plain that all these edifices had been richly

decorated. Certain wall-partitions preserved traces of painting, and there were traces of gilding on the broken statues. The beautiful mantelpieces were still attached to the walls and stood erect in the emptiness. The ground was heaped with all sorts of rubbish; tiny particles of colored window-panes shining amid the greenness of the wild plants; little marble hands which had belonged to statues of cupids; bronze zephyr-wings, formerly gilded, detached from candelabra; ragged tapestry, gnawed by rats, but still revealing a pale queenly figure or a pictured vase filled with flowers; in short, the whole of a princely splendor in bits, of pleasures fallen to dust.

Diana did not understand this abandoning of a castle so huge, whose façade rose still magnificent on the side of the ravine. "What I see," she thought, "must be a dream I'm having now. They tell me that when I have fever, I wander a little. I didn't have it last night; I saw things as they must be. However, I don't feel sick. The fairy told me, you can only see her castle when she permits it. I must content myself with seeing it as she shows it at this moment."

After having vainly looked for the beautiful rooms, the lofty corridors, the paintings and the statues, the golden table loaded with bonbons, all the wonders in the midst of which she had spent the night, Diana went out into the garden. She only found there nettles, brambles, great mulleins and asphodels. I don't know what instinct told her that these plants were no uglier than others. The gardens now stripped of their floral designs and their colored pebble-work, of which she found some traces while hunting strawberries, pleased her just as they were. She picked up some fragments of mosaics, which she put in her pocket. Passing to the edge of the terrace, in the confused mass of shrub-

bery she searched for the statue which had talked to her the evening before. Diana found her standing by the side of the big vase, her arm extended towards the entrance of the castle; but she spoke no more. How had she talked? She had no mouth, she had no face. She only had the back of her head left, with a bit of drapery twisted in her stone hair. The other statues were still more injured by the weather, and the pebbles which stupid children had amused themselves throwing. A person older than Diana would have understood that these statues standing in the wilderness frightened the passers-by, and that sensible people, regretting the havoc, had let the ignorant ones believe that the castle was guarded by a lady without a face who welcomed the inoffensive and punished the ill-bred. Some accidents having occurred at the foot of the terrace, where there was a narrow and difficult passage between the high wall and the little river, the belief in a guardian spirit of the ruins had spread, and people did no more damage. But the sad state of the other statues bore witness to the outrages which they had suffered for a long time. All of them lacked one or both arms; some lay stretched out amid the violet-colored thistles and the yellow toadflax.

Looking with attention at the one who had spoken to her, Diana fancied she recognized the portrait of her lovely fairy. At the same time she also identified the face with that of the dancer painted in the room where she had slept. She could easily imagine in this connection all that she wished. These goddesses of the Renaissance which imitate the antique have a family likeness in figure as well as in costume. Chance having willed that both had no face, little Diana's idea, if not correct, was at least reasonable.

When she was tired walking, she went to hunt her father

and found him below the terrace busy trying to speed up repairs on the carriage. Romanèche had found in the vicinity an amateur wheelwright. This was an honest countryman not too unskillful, but he did not work very fast and was not very well supplied with tools.

"We must be patient, little lady," said Romanèche. "I've found you some brown bread which isn't at all bad, some very fresh cream, and some cherries. I carried it all into your big room. If you want to go back there for breakfast, that will amuse you."

"I'm not bored at all," answered Diana, "but I'll go eat something. I thank you very much for having thought of me."

"How do you feel?" her father asked her. "Did you sleep well?"

"I didn't sleep much, papa, but I was very much amused."

"Amused in your dreams, you mean? You've had gay dreams? Well, it's a good sign; go and eat."

And, watching her go away, Flochardet admired the good temper of this child, so pale and thin, who always found things to her taste, did not distress anyone with her ills, and showed a little quiet gaiety in all circumstances.

"I don't understand," he thought, "why my wife thought she must send her away from home, where she made so little noise and showed herself so easy to please. I know that my sister, the abbess of the Visitandines of Mende, is very good to her, but my wife should pet her more."

Diana went back into the bathing-room. As she could read, she noticed an inscription half rubbed out, over the door of the baths. She succeeded in making it out and read:
Bath of Diana.

"There!" she said to herself laughing, "then I'm at home here? I'd love to bathe, but the water doesn't run any more, and I must content myself with breakfasting and sleeping here."

She found the things excellent which Romanèche had set on the steps of the fish-pool for her. Then she had a mind to draw.

You are right if you think she didn't know much about it; her father had never given her lessons. He contented himself with supplying paper and crayons, as much as she wanted, to make her childish scrawls in a corner of his studio. She tried to copy the portraits she saw him paint. He found these attempts quite funny and laughed at them heartily, but he did not believe that she had the least aptitude for drawing. He was resolved not to torment her into following his career.

At the convent where Diana had just spent a year, drawing was not taught. In those days, one was only given an artist's training to enable one to earn a living. As Flochardet was rich, he planned to make of his daughter a true gentlewoman; that is to say, a pretty person knowing how to dress and gossip, without bothering her head about anything else.

Diana, however, loved drawing passionately, and she never saw a picture, statue or image without examining it most carefully. In the chapel of the convent there were some statuettes of saints and some paintings which pleased her more or less. I don't know why, but looking at the fresco of the Baths of Diana in the Castle of Pictordu, and remembering in a fashion a little confused all that the fairy had shown her during the night, she was persuaded that the

images of her convent were inartistic and that she had now before her eyes something very fine.

She remembered that when packing two sketch-books into his trunk, her father had said to her: "The small one is for you, if you still have the taste for spoiling paper."

She found this sketch-book, sharpened a crayon with her little pocket-knife and set about copying the nymph with the green robe, lighted by the morning sun to a ruddy glow. Diana then noted that this figure did not really dance but passed along majestically, perhaps marking the beat of an easy measure, without bestirring herself. Her two feet were set on the cloud which bore her up, and her hands, clasped in those of her sisters, did not strain at all to speed up the movement of the round. "Perhaps it's a muse," thought Diana, who had not forgotten her mythology, even though all these tales were taboo at the convent.

In a brown study, Diana sketched and sketched. Dissatisfied with her first copy, she made a second and then another, and another, until the sketch-book was half filled. But even then she was still not satisfied. She was going to continue when a little hand was placed on her shoulder. Turning hastily, Diana saw behind her a little girl about ten years old, quite poorly dressed, but pretty and well-built, who regarded her drawing and said with a mocking air:

"You amuse yourself drawing ladies in books, do you?"

"Yes," said Diana, "don't you?"

"I, no, never! My father forbids me to do it. I don't spoil his books."

"My papa gave me this to play with," replied Diana.

"Truly? Then he's very rich?"

"Rich? Goodness, I don't know!"

"You don't know what it is to be rich?"

"Not very well. I've never thought of that."

"That's because you're rich, then. As for me, I know very well what it is to be poor."

"If you're poor . . . I've nothing myself, but I'll ask my papa. . . ."

"Oh! You take me for a begger? You're not polite, you're not! It's because I've only a print dress while you've a silk skirt? You should know that I'm very much above you. You're only the daughter of a painter, and I'm Mademoiselle Blanche de Pictordu, daughter of the Marquis of Pictordu."

"How did you know me?" said Diana, very little impressed by these titles which she did not understand at all.

"I've just seen your papa in the court of my castle, where he talked with my father. I know you spent the night here. Your papa was excusing himself for it and my father, who is a true nobleman, invited him to a house in better order than this deserted castle. I give you notice of it because you're going to come and dine with us at the new house."

"I'll go where my papa wishes," answered Diana, "but I'd like to know why you say this castle is deserted. I think, myself, that it's still very beautiful and that you don't know all there is in inside."

"Within," said Mademoiselle de Pictordu with a dismal and haughty air, "there are adders, bats and nettles. You've no business making fun. I know we've lost the fortune of our ancestors and that we're forced to live like ordinary country gentry. But my papa has told me that doesn't lower us, because no one can prevent our being the only true Pictordus."

Diana understood less and less the ideas and language of

this young lady. She asked her innocently if she was the daughter of the veiled lady.

This question seemed to irritate the young chatelaine very much.

"You should know," she answered sharply, "that the veiled lady doesn't exist and that it's only ignorant and stupid people who believe in such foolishness. I'm not the daughter of a phantom; my mother was of as good a family as my father."

Diana feeling herself too ignorant to answer, made no reply, and just then her father came to tell her to get ready to leave. The carriage was repaired. The Marquis of Pictordu insisted that the painter accept his invitation to dinner. At that time dinner was at noon. The new house of the marquis was at the end of the ravine on the road to Saint-Jean-Gardonenque. From time to time, the marquis came to walk in the ruins of the mansion of his ancestors. Having come by chance this day, he showed himself very kind and hospitable to the travelers whom an accident had delayed here.

Flochardet urged Diana in a low tone to put on a fresher dress before he closed the trunk, but Diana, in spite of her simplicity, had a good deal of tact. She saw clearly that Blanche de Pictordu was envious of her simple traveling costume. She did not wish to increase Blanche's vexation by making herself still finer. She asked her father to let her stay as she was, and she even removed a little turquoise buckle which caught the black velvet ribbon slipped around her neck.

When the carriage was reloaded, the marquis and his daughter, who had come on foot, got in with Diana and Flochardet. A half hour later, they all come to the new house.

It was a little farmhouse with a pigeon-cot bearing the family coat of arms, and with a master's quarters of the most modest type. The marquis was an excellent man, rather narrow, not well informed, although well bred. He was very hospitable and pious, and yet incapable of resigning himself to be one of the least important lords of his province, he who by birth thought himself above the eight great barons of the Gévaudan.

He was not bitter towards anyone and thought it very proper that a painter should enrich himself by work. He showed great respect for Flochardet, of whom he had heard, and he made him as welcome as possible. He could not keep from apologizing constantly for his lack of luxury, and from adding that, in these evil times, the nobility without wealth were no longer looked up to.

It was not that he was disagreeable; he was bored and only asked to be diverted. But he should not have talked so much of his circumstances before his daughter. Little Blanche was naturally proud and envious. Her disposition was already soured and it was a great pity, for she might have been a charming girl, as happy as any other if contented with her lot. Her father was very good to her, and after all, she only lacked the extras.

The dinner was good and very nicely served by a fat countrywoman, who was Blanche's nurse and the only servant of the household.

There was much talk of things which did not interest Diana. But when they talked of the old castle she had left with very lively regret, she opened her ears as wide as possible.

Her father said to the marquis: "I'm surprised, since you mention some money difficulties, at the abandon in

which you've left the objects of ancient art. You might have been able to turn them to account."

"Are there really art-objects in my castle?" asked the marquis.

"There were before all the roofs fell in. I saw many fragments which, saved in time, might have been sent to Italy, where people still have the taste for old things."

"Yes," answered the marquis, "with a little money I might have saved something. I know it, but I lacked this small sum. It would have been necessary to have an artist come, tell him to make a choice and fix the price. And then there would have been the packing, the transportation of the objects, a trusty agent to accompany them. . . . You understand that I could not myself take to trade!"

"But, was there no one in the vicinity who might have bought some tapestries or statues?"

"No one. The new rich despise this old stuff. They follow the mode, and the fashion is for knickknacks, for shell-work, for shepherdesses with powdered hair. People don't care for nymphs and muses any more. They want the twisted, the rich and the overloaded. Isn't that your opinion?"

"I never speak ill of the mode," answered the painter. "I am, by calling, its blind and devoted servant. Nevertheless the style changes, and it is possible that the taste for the old style of the time of the Valois will revive. If you have saved some remains of the ornaments of your castle, guard them. A time may come when they'll have some value."

"I've saved nothing," answered the marquis. "When I came into the world, my father had already let all perish, through vexation and also through pride. Nothing would have induced him to sell a stone of his castle, and he only left it when it all but fell on his head. More humble and

more submissive to the will of heaven, I've come to live in this little farmhouse, the only estate which remains to me out of our immense property."

Diana tried to understand what she heard and she thought she did comprehend. She had a twinge of conscience and drew from her pocket a handful of the little varicolored stones she had picked up in the garden.

"Papa," she said to Monsieur Flochardet, "here's what I've taken from the garden of the castle. I believed they were pebbles like the others. But since you say that monsieur the marquis has done wrong to let everything be lost, these things must be returned to him. They are his and I didn't intend to steal them."

The marquis was touched by Diana's pretty speech. Placing the mosaics back into her hand, he said:

"Keep them in remembrance of us. I'm sorry, my dear little girl, that these are bits of glass and fragments of marble without any value. I wish I had something better to give you."

Diana hesitated to take back the playthings which were offered her so graciously. In hastily taking out the contents of her pocket, she had drawn out of it her little buckle of turquoises. She looked at her father indicating to him Mademoiselle Blanche who regarded the trinket and seemed dying to touch it. Flochardet understood the kind intent of his daughter, and presenting the buckle to Mademoiselle de Pictordu, he said to her:

"Diana begs you to accept, in exchange for your pretty pebbles, these little cut stones, so that you may have something to remember each other by."

Blanche reddened until her ears were crimson. She was

too proud to accept simply, but her longing for the pretty turquoises made her heart throb.

"It will grieve my daughter greatly if you refuse," Flochardet told her.

Blanche seized the trinket with a vigorous movement, almost snatched it from the hands of the painter. She departed on the run, without taking the time for thanks, so greatly did she fear that her father would command her to refuse the gift.

This was perhaps what he would have done if he had any hopes of being obeyed. But, knowing the child's nature he did not wish to make his guests witnesses of a painful scene. He begged Flochardet to excuse the brusque manners of a little savage and thanked him in her place.

Dinner being over, Flochardet, who wished to travel the rest of the day, took leave of the marquis, inviting him, if he came south, to honor him with a visit. The marquis thanked the painter for the pleasant moments he had spent with him, and they exchanged a handclasp. Blanche, at her father's command, came with bad grace to give a cool kiss to Diana. She had the turquoise clasp at her throat and held on to it with one hand, as if she feared it would be taken back. Diana could not help thinking her very stupid, but pardoned her because of the good marquis, who had had the baskets of the carriage filled with his best cakes and finest fruits.

IV

THE LITTLE BACCHUS

THE rest of the journey was made without accident.

Diana had no more fever, and had almost regained her

color when Flochardet placed her in the arms of her step-mother, saying: "I'm bringing her back to you because she was sick. I think she's already cured, but we must see whether the fever returns."

Diana was so glad to find herself at home with her parents that she was as if intoxicated with joy for many days. Madame Flochardet was also glad and at first occupied herself a great deal with the child. She seemed to love Diana greatly and made her a thousand little presents, amusing herself with the child as if she were a pretty doll. Diana let herself be curled, decked out, and did not display any impatience at the great amount of time devoted to her toilet. But, without knowing why, she experienced much weariness at having to occupy herself so much with her appearance. She hid her yawns, but turned pale when she had to stand before a glass to try on bonnets and dresses. She could not adjust herself to the taste of her step-mother. When she tried to make herself more simple and to follow her own taste, she was scolded and treated harshly as if she had committed a grave fault. She would have liked to busy herself with something else, to learn no matter what. She asked many questions, but Madame Flochardet found her questions stupid. She did not think that the child should be interested in serious matters. Diana had to conceal her great desire to learn to draw. Madame Laura Flochardet longed for the day when her husband, having made his fortune, would no longer have to paint at home, and when it would be possible to put on the airs of a great lady.

Diana began to be really wearied and to long for the convent, even though she had not liked it very well. There, at least, the use of her hours was regulated for her. She

became pale again, her step flagged, and her fever reappeared about sunset one in every two days, lasting until morning.

Then Madame Laura was unreasonably disturbed and plagued Diana to make her take a quantity of drugs, on the advice of all the fine ladies who came to call. Every day there was a new method of curing the fever, and as nothing was followed up, nothing succeeded. The child continued to submit to everything and to try to reassure her parents, saying that there was nothing the matter with her and she felt no pain.

Monsieur Flochardet, though less excited, was really more anxious than his wife. Compelled to give all the hours of the day to his painting, in the evening he stayed close by his daughter's bed. When her mind wandered he feared she might be going mad.

Happily, he had for a friend a good old doctor, who was a better judge of the situation. He knew Madame Flochardet well, and observed her treatment of the child. One day, he said to Monsieur Flochardet:

"Throw away all these bottles and all these pills. Only give her what I prescribe and do not oppose her tastes, since she has only sensible ones. Don't you see that the idleness to which she's condemned, for fear of making her sick, makes her still more sick? She is bored; let her hunt an occupation for herself, and when she shows a marked preference for a study, help her to devote herself to it. Above all do not make a little mannequin of her for the trying-on of costumes. It's a hardship for her, and not a pleasure. Leave her body and her hair free. If it makes Madame Flochardet suffer to see her so, try to make her forget it and occupy herself with something else."

Monsieur Flochardet understood and, knowing that Madame Laura was hard to persuade, he managed so that she was diverted. He reassured her telling her that the child was not seriously ill, and urged his wife to resume her life of calls, drives, dinings-out, and evening parties, where one danced or conversed. He did not have difficulty in so persuading her. Diana became free, and her nurse, charged with serving her and staying with her, crossed her no more than in times past.

Then Diana asked again and obtained permission to slip into her father's studio when he was working. She reappeared there, always well-behaved in her little corner, looking sometimes at the canvas, sometimes at the model. She no longer tried to make daubs and afforded no more opportunity for laughter at her expense. She knew now that painting is an art, and that one must have studied it to know it.

Her desire to learn it remained so keen that it was almost a mania, but she spoke of it no more. She feared that her father would say as before that she was not gifted in drawing, and that her stepmother would oppose her wish.

Monsieur Flochardet did not interfere with her. As Monsieur Féron, the old doctor, had advised him to note her natural tastes, he expected she would exhibit her old fondness for portraits. He supplied her with crayons and paper, but Diana did not make use of them. She looked at her father's works and cartoons, and dreamed.

She thought often of the Castle of Pictordu. As they sometimes in her presence spoke of that ruin where Monsieur Flochardet had been forced to spend a night, she dared no longer believe in all that the fairy with the veil

had shown her. She regretted having seen the castle in a fashion a little confused, through fever perhaps. If it had been a dream, she would have liked to begin all over again. But one does not dream what one wishes to dream, and the muse of the Baths of Diana did not return to summon her.

One day while arranging her playthings, for she was very orderly, Diana found again the little pebbles and the fragments of mosaic from the garden of Pictordu. Among the pebbles there was a ball of hardened sand, the size of a nut, which she had picked up to use for a marble. She tried it for the first time. When she made it skip, she saw the sand fall away and discovered a real bit of marble within. Only this was no longer perfectly round; instead, it was oval, and hollows and reliefs were to be found on it. Diana examined it and saw that it was a little head, the head of a statuette of a child. Its face seemed so pretty to her, that she did not tire of looking at it, of turning it over, of putting it sometimes in the sun, sometimes in the half-light, thinking always to discover a new beauty.

She had been absorbed thus for an hour when the doctor who had entered very quietly and was observing her, said in a friendly tone: "What are you looking at now with so much pleasure, my little Diana?"

"I don't know," she answered, reddening, "look yourself, my good friend. I think it's the countenance of a little Cupid."

"It's more likely that of a young Bacchus, for there are vine-leaves in his hair. Where did you find it?"

"In the sand and pebbles at that old castle my papa was talking about again yesterday."

"Let me see!" said the doctor putting on his glasses. "Well, it is very pretty! It's an antique."

"That means a thing which is not in style. Mamma Laura says that everything antique is very ugly."

"As for me, I think the opposite. It's the new which I find ugly."

Monsieur Flochardet entered at this moment. He had finished a sitting for a portrait, and, before commencing another, had come to shake hands with the doctor and to ask him how he found the child. "I find her all right," answered Monsieur Féron, "and more right than you, for she admires this little fragment of antique statuary, and I wager that you don't."

After it was explained to him how this object happened to be in Diana's possession, Flochardet looked at it with indifference and said tossing it back on the table:

"It's no worse than other things of this period, if it's an antique. I'd not be able to say. You fancy these relics, and think yourself capable of passing judgment on them. I don't question your skill and your learning, my dear doctor. But such remains are so worn, so shapeless, that you often view them with the eyes of faith. I confess it would be impossible for me to do as much. All these so-called masterpieces of Greek or Roman art put me in mind of Diana's dolls when they have their noses broken and their cheeks roughened."

"You dare to make such a comparison," said the doctor angered. "Oh, well, you're a frivolous artist! You only understand lace and muffs. You don't have any knowledge of what life really is!"

Flochardet was accustomed to the doctor's zeal. He laughed, and his servant having come to inform him that

the carriage of his patroness, the Marquise of Sept-Pointes, had arrived in the court, he retired still laughing.

"You're unkind today, my good friend," said Diana, shocked at the doctor, "my papa is a great artist; everyone says so."

"That's why he oughtn't to talk nonsense," replied the doctor, still very much provoked.

"If what he says isn't so, he says it for fun."

"Apparently! Be that as it may, but . . . listen: You find that little head pretty, do you not?"

"Oh, very pretty; truly I love it!"

"Do you know why?"

"No."

"Try to tell me why."

"It laughs, it's gay, it's young, it's like a real child."

"And yet it's the image of a god?"

"You've called it the god of the vintage."

"It isn't a child like the others? The one who made it thought this child must be stronger and prouder than any mortal. Look at how the neck is attached; the strength and grace of the nape. See the hair a little rough about the low and broad brow. But I'm telling you too much; you don't understand it yet."

"Go on telling me, my good friend. Perhaps I'll understand!"

"It doesn't tire you to pay attention?"

"Oh, no, it rests me."

"Well, you should know that the Greek artists had a feeling for the noble and they employed it in the smallest things. You don't remember having seen my little collection of statuettes?"

"Yes, indeed, I remember it very well, as well as the

greater collection in the city. But no one has ever explained anything to me."

"You shall come and spend a morning at my house. I'll make you understand why, with materials the most simple and figures scarcely indicated, these artists always created the great and the beautiful. You shall also see Roman busts of more recent times. Great artists also, the Romans! Less noble, less pure than the Greeks, but always true, and perceiving life in that which is truly life."

"I don't understand any longer!" said Diana sighing, "and I want to know so much what it is that you call life!"

"It's very simple. Your dress, your shoe, your comb, are they living things?"

"Oh, no!"

"My eyes, my smile, this deep wrinkle in my forehead, are they dead things?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, when you see a person in picture or statue, whose face does not live, be sure this is not much better than the face of your doll. All the details of her dress or her jewels do not make her live. You hold there only a head without a body, very much worn. But it lives because the one who carved it in this little piece of marble had the will and the knowledge to make it live. Do you understand now?"

"I think I do, a little; but go on."

"No, that's enough for today. We'll talk about it another time; do not lose . . ."

"My little head? Oh! there's no danger of that. I love it too much. It came to me from someone I'll never forget."

"Who was that?"

"The lady who . . . the lady that . . . but I can't tell you; I really can't!"

"You have secrets?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. I don't want to tell!"

"But to me, your old friend?"

"You'll make fun of me?"

"I promise you I won't."

"But you'll say it was the fever."

"What if I should say that?"

"It would make me feel badly."

"Then, I'll not say it. Tell me."

Diana told all her fancies and all her delights in the Castle of Pictordu. The doctor listened without laughing and without looking as if he doubted her. He even helped her by his questions to remember well and to make herself very clear. It was for him an interesting study of the effect of fever on the imagination of a child with a bent towards poetry; consequently, towards the marvelous. He did not think he should undeceive her, but left her, as he found her, in doubt. He did not wish to assure her that what she had seen and heard was certain and real. He had the air of not absolutely knowing whether she had dreamed or not, and the doubtfulness in which he left her was a joy to her. When he went away he said to himself: "One doesn't sufficiently realize the wrong done to children in making fun of their likings, and the wrong one may do them in repressing their talents. This little child is a born artist, and her father does not suspect it. Heaven preserve her from his lessons! He would spoil her talent and give her a distaste for art."

Happily for Diana, her excellent father did not take

it into his head to make her work. As she was delicate, he was resolved not to cross her in any way. She went to spend more than one morning at the doctor's house. She saw his ancient works of art again and again, his busts, his statuettes, his medals, his cameos and his engravings. He was an earnest amateur and a good critic, although he had never attempted to draw. He made things clear, and that was all that was necessary for Diana to want to copy what she saw. She now drew a good deal at his house while he made his visits.

I would be deceiving you, children, if I told you that she sketched well. She was too young and too given over to her own devices. But she had already acquired something very important: that was her understanding that her drawings were not good. Formerly, she was pleased with everything that came to the point of her crayon. She saw with her imagination and in her ignorance, charming personages instead of the grotesque figures which she had just traced. When she had made a ball with four down-strokes underneath, she persuaded herself that she had made a sheep or a horse. These easy self-deceptions were at an end. Each time she made an outline, it was useless for the doctor to say, "Well, well, it isn't bad!" She said to herself, "No, it's bad. I see clearly that it's bad."

She thought sometimes that the fever kept her from seeing clearly, and she begged her good friend to cure her. He succeeded little by little. Then, feeling herself stronger and gayer, she did not find herself so much in a hurry to know how to draw. She forgot her crayons and spent the time walking in the garden or in the country with her nurse, amusing herself with everything, gaining strength, and sleeping every night very well indeed.

V

THE LOST FACE

THEY left the city in the month of May and went to the country. Diana was very happy there.

One day when she was gathering violets on the edge of a little wood which was between her father's garden and that of a lady of the neighborhood, she heard some one talking very close to her. Looking through the branches, she saw her stepmother who was calling on this lady, in a pretty dress of muslin over rose taffeta. The neighbor was dressed more sensibly for a walk in the woods, where Madame Laura had found her. They were both seated on a bench.

Diana went to speak to them; then stopped timidly. She was not shy, but Madame Laura had become so cold and so indifferent that she did not know whether she pleased her by approaching her. She now drew back, undecided and troubled, and set about picking violets again, not wishing to run away, but awaiting a summons.

As she was bending over behind the shrubbery, the ladies did not see her any longer and Diana heard Madame Laura say to her friend: "I thought she'd come and curtsy to you, but she hid herself to get out of doing it. The poor child is so badly trained since I've been forbidden to look after her! What can you expect, my dear? Her father is weak, and ruled by this Doctor Féron, who is a rough, ill-bred fellow. He has decreed that the child mustn't be given any education. So you see the fine result!"

"It's a pity," said the other lady, "she's pretty and she has a gentle look. I see her often about my garden. She

touches nothing, and greets me politely when she sees me. If she was a little better got up she would be quite all right."

"Got up, that's just it! My dear, would you believe that the old doctor has forbidden her wearing a corset! Not a whalebone on her body! How could you expect that she wouldn't grow crooked?"

"She isn't crooked; on the contrary she's well built. But she could be dressed without binding her, and still not be denied a little trimming on her skirts."

"Bah! It's she who doesn't wish it. That child detests dress. She takes after her mother, who was a common person and more occupied looking after her kitchen than in making a good appearance and having good manners."

"I knew her, the mother," replied the neighbor. "She was a good woman, a sensible person, and very elegant, I assure you."

"Oh, it's possible! I'm only talking from hearsay. Monsieur Flochardet has her portrait hidden somewhere. He's never shown it to me. He doesn't want me to speak of her, and, after all, it's all the same to me! Let them raise the child as they please, since it doesn't concern me! I'd have loved her, though, if I'd been trusted with making her agreeable. . . . But . . ."

"But she's now unpleasant and disagreeable?"

"No, my dear, she's worse than that; she's simple, absent-minded, and I believe a little idiotic."

"Poor little girl! Isn't she taught anything?"

"Nothing at all! She doesn't even know how to fasten on a ribbon or to place a flower in her hair."

"I thought she loved to draw?"

"Yes, she loves that, but her father says she has no

taste and does not understand anything about painting. As she knows nothing about anything else. . . .”

Diana did not hear anything more. She put her hands over her ears and went away into the depth of the wood to hide her tears. She felt very sorrowful without quite knowing why. Was it because she had been found so stupid and unskillful? Or was it not rather the sorrow of finding she was not loved at all?

“My papa loves me, though,” she said to herself, “I’m sure of it. If he finds me stupid and unskillful . . . It’s possible, but he doesn’t love me the less for it. It’s Mamma Laura who does not care for me.”

Up to this moment Diana had done her best to love her stepmother. Now she felt Madame Laura was nothing to her, and, for the first time, she thought of her mother and made a great effort to remember. This was quite impossible; she was still in the cradle when she lost her mother and was not yet conscious of anything. She remembered very vaguely the marriage of her father with Madame Laura. She had merely noticed the sadness of her nurse on that day; she remembered having heard her say several times:

“Poor child! this is unfortunate for her.”

Madame Laura had embraced Diana and crammed her with bonbons. The child had paid no more attention to the grief of her nurse, but now she began to understand it on hearing the sharp words of her stepmother concerning her dead mother and herself. No one had ever told her anything about her mother and she now set herself to dreaming with an ardor and a grief entirely new in her life. It was like a discovery which she made in herself of an emotion

sleeping in the depths of her heart. She dropped down on the grass repeating in a voice broken by sobs:

"Mamma! mamma!"

Then through the branches of the lilacs in bloom she heard herself called by a sweet voice which said:

"Diana, my dear Diana, my child, where are you?"

"Here, here, I'm here!" cried Diana quite beside herself, running towards the voice.

The call still came, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. She rushed to overtake it, and she came to the bank of a great river without knowing where she was. She entered the water and found herself seated on the back of a dolphin which had eyes of silver and fins of gold. She did not think about her mother any more. She saw sirens who gathered flowers in the very middle of the river. All at once she was on the summit of a mountain, where a great snow-statue said to her:

"I'm your mother, come and embrace me!"

But she could not stir, for she had also become a snow-statue, and broke in two rolling to the bottom of a ravine. There she saw again the Castle of Pictordu and the veiled lady, who beckoned to her to follow. She tried to cry out:

"Show me my mother!" but the veiled lady became a cloud, and Diana awoke feeling a kiss on her forehead.

It was her nurse, the good Geofffrette, who lifted her saying: "I've been hunting you for a good quarter of an hour. You mustn't sleep like that on the grass; the ground is still cool. Here's your lunch I went to get. Get up now; it isn't good for you there! Come this way so you can eat in the sunshine."

Diana was not hungry. She was quite upset by her dream, which she confused with what had happened before. It was

some minutes before she gathered herself together. Then, suddenly, she said to Geoffrette:

"Nounou, where's mamma? Not my mamma now, no, no! not Madame Laura; my real mamma, the one before!"

"Oh, dear me!" said Geoffrette, quite taken by surprise, "she's in heaven; you know it very well!"

"Yes, you've already told me that! But where is it, heaven? How does one get there?"

"By reason, my child, by goodness and by patience," answered Geoffrette, who was not at all stupid, although she spoke seldom and never unnecessarily.

Diana held her head and thought.

"I know" she said, "that I'm a child and I lack reason."

"Oh, no! you've enough for your age!"

"But, at my age, one is stupid, isn't one, and annoys others?"

"Why do you say that? Am I bored by you? Your father cherishes you, and the doctor loves you."

"But Madame Laura?"

And, as Geoffrette, who hated to fib, said nothing, Diana added:

"Oh! I know very well she doesn't love me. Tell me if my mother loved me."

"To be sure, she adored you, although you were only a tiny baby."

"And, now, if she saw me, she'd love me, more or less?"

"Mothers always love their children the same, at every age."

"Then it's a misfortune for me not to have my mother any more?"

"It's a misfortune which you must overcome for your-

self by always being as good and as well-behaved as if she were looking at you."

"But she doesn't see me?"

"Oh, I didn't say that! I don't know anything about it, but I can't say she doesn't see you."

It was the right sort of response for Diana, who had imagination and soul. She embraced her nurse and asked her a thousand questions concerning her mother.

"My child," said Geoffrette, "you ask too much of me. I knew your mamma a very short time. To me she stood for what is most beautiful and best in the world. I shed many tears for her and I still mourn her when I think of her. So don't talk too much about her or you'll make me feel badly."

She answered in this way to quiet Diana who she perceived was quite upset. She succeeded in diverting her, but, that evening, the child had a little fever again, and all that night confused and tiring dreams. In the morning she became less restless, opened her eyes and saw that day was commencing to break. Through her blue curtains her room seemed all blue, and she could discern nothing there. Little by little, she saw more clearly a person standing at the foot of her bed.

"Is it you, Nounou?" she said, but there was no response and Diana heard Geoffrette coughing a little in her own bed. Who then was this person who seemed to watch over Diana?

"Is it you, Mamma Laura?" she said, forgetting her stepmother's hard words and asking nothing better than to love her again.

The person still did not answer and Diana saw there was a veil over her face. "Oh!" she said joyfully, "I know

you! You're my good fairy from down there! Now here you are at last! Have you come to be my mamma?"

"Yes," answered the veiled lady, her lovely voice resounding like crystal.

"And you'll love me?"

"Yes, if you love me."

"Oh, I'm quite willing to love you!"

"Do you want to come for a walk with me?"

"Yes indeed, right away; but I feel weak!"

"I'll carry you."

"Yes, yes! Let's go!"

"What do you wish to see?"

"My mother."

"Your mother? . . . I am she."

"Truly? Oh, then lift your veil, so that I may see your face."

"You know very well I don't have one any more."

"Oh, dear! I'll never see it then?"

"That depends on you; you'll see it the day you give it back to me."

"Oh! but tell me what that means, and how can I do it?"

"You must find it again. Come with me, I'll teach you many things."

The lady with the veil took Diana in her arms and carried her away . . . I couldn't tell you where; Diana has never remembered. It seems that she saw very beautiful things, for when Geoffrette came to awaken her, she pushed her away with her little hand and turned away to sleep and dream again, but her dream was changed. The veiled lady had taken the face and the garments of the doctor, who said to her: "What is it to me whether Madame Laura loves you or not. We've many other things to interest us

than to occupy ourselves with her!" Next Diana dreamed that her bed was covered with statues, each more beautiful than the others, and whenever she looked at the face of a goddess or a muse, she said: "Oh, there's my mother; I'm sure of it!" but immediately the face changed and she could not find again the one she thought she recognized.

About nine o'clock, the doctor, to whom Geoffrette had sent word, entered Diana's room with her father. The child had no fever; the attack was over. She was watched during the day, and the next night was quite herself. Two days later, she was cured anew, and on the doctor's orders, began again her life of walks and freedom.

VI

THE SOUGHT-FOR FACE

ONE fine day of this same year, the doctor who kept a watchful eye over everything, perceived a change in the family. Madame Laura could not hide her desire to see Diana sent back to the convent. She did not hate her; Madame Laura wasn't wicked. She was only vain, and she reproached Diana for being stupid because she was stupid herself. She was wounded at not having the direction of the child, at not having this plaything at her disposal. She talked constantly to her husband of the idleness in which the child lived. She would have thought her occupied usefully in leading the wasted and perfectly useless life which she herself led. Flochardet did not know any longer what to think. He was torn between the nagging of his wife and the advice of the doctor. He regarded his daughter with doubt, with anxiety, asking himself if she had an intelli-

gence above her age, as Monsieur Féron maintained, or if she was rough and neglected as Madame Laura claimed. Finally, if for her own good he would not do better to entrust her anew to the care of his sister, the nun of Mende.

Diana herself soothed by Geoffrette's wise words, by her return to good health and by her good disposition incapable of cherishing resentment, did not seem to be disturbed at the little sharp and cold reproaches which her stepmother flung at her. But she did not love her any more, and did not try any longer to gain her love. This beautiful lady had become unimportant to her. She was thinking of something quite different.

The desire for self-improvement began to take hold of her. It was not drawing alone which she wished to learn; it was history, the interest and importance of which the doctor's art-lessons had revealed. She was troubled as to the whys and wherefores of the things of this world. "It's too soon," the doctor told her, "at your age one is very fortunate to understand nothing of human folly." But, as it is impossible to give the history of any art without touching on the causes of decadence and progress, one might as well say without touching on the entire history of human kind, he let himself be carried away into really instructing her. Diana listened with so much eagerness he was sorry not to be able to occupy himself with her all the time; the more so, because at home Diana did not meet with any serious ideas. Flochardet indeed talked of letting her have a governess, but it was easy to foresee that no one would seem endurable to Madame Laura.

Then the doctor took a great resolution: "I wish," he said to the artist, "that you would give me your daughter and her nurse."

"Are you joking?" cried Flochardet, "give you my daughter?"

"Yes, give her to me without her leaving you, since we live next door to each other in town as well as in the country. She can spend the night at your house if you wish, but she will be at my house from morning until night. It is I who shall teach her and look after her in my own way."

"But you'll not have the time!" said Flochardet.

"I shall have the time! Here I am old and quite rich; I've the right to rest and give over my practice to my nephew who has just completed his studies and who is certainly no fool. I've raised him like my son, but I've always wanted to have a daughter and divide my fortune between two children of different sex. Now then, is it agreed?"

The last argument of the doctor was very strong. Flochardet did not think he had the right to refuse such a fine future for his daughter, the more so because at the rate Madame Laura was living it was to be feared that his own fortune would be affected some day or another. Already, to satisfy her luxurious tastes, she had made him contract debts which he did not dare to confess.

He yielded and Madame Laura was very well pleased. She even thought it would be much more convenient for the child and Geoffrette to live all the time at the doctor's house. Flochardet yielded again, and Diana was installed in a charming little room well arranged for her, with Geoffrette near. The doctor kept his word. He gave up the active part of his profession. As he was considered a fine doctor, he could not refuse to give each day two hours of consultation during the playtime of his pupil. Diana spent these two hours at her father's house. In the evening, Mon-

sieur Marcelin, nephew and successor of Monsieur Féron, came to submit to him the serious or interesting cases, and to accept his opinion respectfully. Then, when he had the time he played and talked with Diana whom he treated like a little sister, for a fine young man was Marcelin. He was incapable of feeling any jealousy towards her, and thought himself sufficiently enriched by the education, the skill and the patients which he owed to his uncle. An heir of this character . . . you see, children, the marvelous is in nature, for after all, if there are not many like that, there are some, and I know of them.

Diana now became very happy, very studious and in very good health. She seemed to have forgotten a little her passion for drawing. One would have said that, in spite of her being still a child, she had seen that all is bound up in the understanding and that only knowing one thing is not knowing anything at all.

When Diana had become a grown-up person of twelve years, she was still a charming child, simple, gay, good to everyone. She did not push herself forward making herself conspicuous, but was very well-informed for her age. Her character had serious and ardent sides that people did not know. She did very pretty painting, having learned a little of the method by watching her father. But she did not show her work now to anyone, because once the doctor had said it was very good and Monsieur Flochardet had answered that it was very bad. Diana knew that the doctor, who had some good critical ideas, understood nothing of the method in painting. He had developed love of the beautiful in her, but he could not give the technic to seize upon it. She knew also that her father had a method entirely opposed to the theories of the doctor, that he could

never judge favorably what was outside his own style, and without meaning to be was quite capable of being unjust.

But could Diana herself know what to think? This was what she asked herself anxiously. What ought she to think of her father's talent which the doctor criticized with so much apparent justice? And what ought she to think of the criticisms of the doctor who was incapable of holding a crayon or of drawing a line? This problem tormented her so very much that she again became a little ill because of it. She had grown a great deal, but was not thin nor delicate. The doctor looked after her without uneasiness, but in seeking to find the mental cause which brought back these little attacks of fever, Geoffrette confided to him that, in her opinion, Diana drew too much. As she did not want anyone to see her work, she got up before daybreak. The nurse who watched her saw her sometimes become flushed and almost mad with joy when drawing; sometimes pale and discouraged, her eyes full of tears.

The doctor resolved to confess his dear adopted daughter and, although she would have wished to keep silent, she could not resist his affectionate questions. "Well," she said to him, "I admit it, I've a fixed idea. I must find a face and I don't find it!"

"What face? Always the lady with the veil? Has this childish fancy come back to a big sensible girl like you?"

"Alas, my friend, this fancy has never left me since the veiled lady said to me: 'I'm your mother and you'll see my face when you've given it back to me.' I didn't understand immediately; but little by little I saw that I must find again and draw a face which I've never seen, my mother's, and it's that I'm searching for. They told me she was so beautiful! Perhaps it will be impossible for

me to make anything which approaches it, without having a great deal of talent. I should be glad indeed to have it, but it doesn't come. I'm dissatisfied with myself; I tear or daub all that I do. All my faces are ugly or insignificant. I look at how my father sets about improving his models, for it's certain that he beautifies them. I see it very clearly now, and I know that his success comes from that. Well, see what happens to me! When I look at them, these models who are certainly not all beautiful—there are some quite faded ladies and some very ugly gentlemen who come to his house to be painted—I find the most ugly face less . . . how shall I express it? more worth while accepting than the handsome face which my father gives them. They are really themselves, those faces which sit for their portraits. They have some quality which is original. That is exactly what my father thinks he must take away from them—and they're glad to have it taken away from them. In my mind, I paint them as they are, and it's clear to me that if I knew how to paint, I'd do it just contrary to the way papa does it. It's that which torments me and grieves me, for he certainly has talent and I haven't."

"He has talent and you haven't, that is certain," answered the doctor, "but you'll have it; you're too much tormented for it not to come to you, and when you have it—I don't want to tell you that you'll have more of it than he. I don't know that—but this will be another kind of talent, because you see with different eyes. He is, therefore, not able to teach you anything. It's your work to find things out alone, and that takes time. You want to go too fast; that is where you risk not having any talent at all. You have fever and a person can do nothing worth while when he isn't well. As to the face which you search

for; it's easy to make you acquainted with it if that would drive away the veiled lady who haunts you. Your father has a very good half-miniature of your mother, and very like her. He did not do it and he doesn't care for it, because the style of it is the opposite of his style. He doesn't show it to anyone and maintains that it isn't like her at all. As for me I say that it's she, absolutely, and I can ask him for it to show you."

At this moment Diana felt only the desire to know her mother's features. She thanked the doctor eagerly and accepted his offer with a tremulous joy. Monsieur Féron promised her that the next day she would have the miniature before her eyes. He made her promise to be calm until then and to work henceforth with less ardor and more patience. "Ten years more are necessary," he said, "before you know clearly what you're about. You must see the masterpieces of the great artists. We'll travel when you're of an age to profit by it. Then you can take lessons of some good painter, for here, under the eyes of your father, that would be found fault with. He is thought to be the greatest in the world, and he himself would perhaps be wounded to see you with another teacher."

"Oh! It's impossible, I understand that," cried Diana, "I'll have patience, my good friend. I'll be sensible, I promise you."

She kept her word as far as possible. But, as soon as she was asleep, she saw again the veiled lady who proposed to her a walk to the Castle of Pictordu. Hardly had she arrived there, when a tall young lady, slender and very pretty, came to ask them to go away as quickly as possible, because the castle was about to fall. Diana discovered that

this young girl was none other than Mademoiselle Blanche de Pictordu, and, when addressed by name, she replied:

"It's not hard for you to recognize me, because you see at my neck the turquoise brooch you gave me. Without that, you wouldn't know who I am, for you haven't any memory at all, and you're too unskillful to draw my face. Go away from here. The castle yawns and complains. It's tired of withstanding storms, and everything is about to fall to pieces."

Diana was afraid, but the veiled lady motioned Blanche away with her hand, and entered the peristyle beckoning Diana to follow. Diana obeyed and the castle tumbled down on them. But it did them no more harm than if it were a little squall of snow. The ground was heaped with cameos which fell from the clouds, each more beautiful than the others.

"Quick," said the veiled lady, "try to find my face! It should be there; it's your task to recognize it. If you don't succeed, so much the worse for you; you'll never know me!" Diana hunted a long time, gathering up the engraved cameos, some sunken on hard stone, others in relief on shells. This one represented a very elegant person, full-length, that one a profile charming or severe. Some faces grimaced like antique masks, the majority bore an austere or melancholy expression, and all were of an exquisite workmanship which she could not help admiring. But the fairy hurried her.

"Quick now," she said, "don't amuse yourself looking at all these people; it's I, I alone who must be found."

Then Diana discovered under her hand a transparent cornelian stone, on which was cut in dim white an ideally beautiful profile. The hair was tied back with a ribbon and

there was a star on the forehead. First, this small head seemed to her the size of the setting of a ring. But as she looked at it, it grew larger and finally filled all the hollow of her hand. "At last," cried the fairy, "here I am! It is indeed I, your muse, your mother. You shall see that you're not mistaken." She began to untie her veil which was fastened behind—but Diana could not discern the face, for the phantom vanished, and she awoke disheartened. However, the product of her imagination had been so vivid and so striking, that she could not gather her wits together immediately. She closed her hand, thinking to feel the precious cameo there, which at least would preserve for her the precious likeness so eagerly sought. Alas, this illusion only lasted an instant. It was in vain that she clinched her hand and opened it finally. There was nothing within, absolutely nothing.

When she had risen, the doctor entered her room carrying a morocco-leather box with gold clasps. He was about to open it, thinking to bring a gentle happiness to her, but motioning him away she cried: "No, no, my good friend! I mustn't see it yet! She doesn't wish it. I must find her all by myself; otherwise, she will abandon me forever!"

"As you please," answered the doctor, "you've ideas of your own that I can't always understand, but I don't wish to oppose you. I'm leaving you this locket; it is yours. Your father is giving it to you, and you may look at it when the fairy who talks to you in your dreams gives you permission, or when you don't believe any more in fairies. That will come soon, for you're at an age when one can distinguish the dream from the reality, and I'm not at all disturbed concerning your reason."

Diana thanked Monsieur Féron for his kindness and the beautiful present he had secured for her. She kissed the

locket, and, without opening it, put it carefully in her little secretary. She pledged herself to await the permission of the mysterious muse—and she kept her word. She resisted the desire to know this dear face and she applied herself again to searching for it at the point of her crayon. But she also kept her word to her good friend. She worked with more patience, not insisting on succeeding immediately, and applied herself to copying casts, without hoping to succeed in creating something beautiful from one day to the next.

A strange idea which helped her to be patient, was that she felt she remembered perfectly the beautiful profile she had seen and touched in her dream. It was always before her eyes, and always the same, whenever she wished to think of it. She kept herself from thinking of it too long and too often, for then she seemed to see it waver and threaten to disappear.

VII

THE FACE FOUND AGAIN

DIANA continued to teach herself and to be very happy when one day—she was then nearly fifteen years old—she found her father sad and changed.

“Are you ill, dear father?” she said kissing him. “You don’t look natural.”

“Nonsense,” answered Flochardet a little gruffly, “are you an expert in faces, you?”

“I try to be, papa; I do what I can,” answered Diana, who saw in her father’s words a mockery of her unsuccessful passion for art.

“You do what you can!” said Monsieur Flochardet, surveying her sadly. “Why have you got into your head this

mad idea of being an artist? You've no need of that, for you have found a second father, wiser and happier than the first. You want to know the cares of work, when you can dispense with it! Why so? What's the good of it?"

"I can't tell you, dear papa. It's in spite of myself. But if it displeases you to have me try, I'll give it up, however much regret that might cause me."

"No, no! amuse yourself, do what you wish, dream of the impossible; it's the blessing of youth. Later, you'll know that talent does not save from mischance and adversity!"

"Oh dear, you're unhappy, you are!" cried Diana throwing herself into his arms. "Tell me what's the matter. You must tell me. I don't want to be happy any more if you're not happy."

"Don't be afraid," answered Flochardet, embracing her tenderly. "I said that to put you to the proof. I haven't any trouble; I thought you didn't love me any more because . . . because I've neglected your education, and have entrusted it to another. You've perhaps thought I was a frivolous, indifferent father, ordered about like a child. . . ."

"No, no, father. I adore you, and I've never thought that. Dear me, why should I have thought it!"

"Because I've sometimes thought it myself. I've directed certain reproaches at myself. Now, I console myself by thinking that if any financial trouble comes to me, you'll not feel the effects of it."

Diana tried to question him further, but her father changed the subject and set to work again. He was agitated, impatient, as if he had lost heart in his work. All at once he crossly threw down his brush saying: "It's no go today. I'd spoil my canvas; a little more and I'd tear it. Come take a walk with me!"



HWH

MADAME LAURE CAME IN, AS SMART AS USUAL

As they were getting ready to go out, Madame Laura came in, as smart as usual, but with her face also troubled:

"What," she said to her husband, "you're going out, and you must deliver this portrait this evening."

"And if I should not deliver it until tomorrow?" answered Flochardet sharply, "am I the slave of my clients?"

"No, but . . . You must be paid for this painting this evening, for tomorrow morning . . ."

"Oh, yes, your tailoress, your cloth-merchant. They're out of patience, I know it, and if they're not satisfied, there'll be a new scandal."

Diana, astonished, almost frightened, stared with her eyes wide open, which attracted Madame Laura's attention. "My dear child," she said, "you disturb your father too often. You prevent him from working, and today especially, he must work. Leave him in peace."

"You send me away from our home?" cried Diana stupefied and dismayed.

"No, never!" said Monsieur Flochardet making her sit down close to him. "You remain! you never disturb me, you!"

"Then, it's I who am troublesome," cried Madame Laura, "I understand and I know what remains for me to do."

"Do whatever pleases you," replied Flochardet in an icy tone.

She left and Diana burst into tears.

"What's the matter with you now?" said her father trying to smile. "What difference does it make to you if I quarrel a little from time to time with Mamma Laura? She's not your mother and you don't love her madly."

"You're unhappy," answered Diana sobbing, "my father is unhappy and I didn't know it!"

"No," said he, resuming his usual light tone. "One isn't unhappy because of having annoyances. I have them sharp enough, I confess it, but I'll get the better of them. I'll work more, that's all. I thought I'd be able to gain some repose, for I'd earned close to two hundred thousand francs. In the provinces it's a comfortable little fortune, but I must tell you, for you'd learn it some day or another. We've made too great a show. I had the imprudence to build a house and the estimates were terribly exceeded. In short, I must sell and at a loss, for the creditors are urgent. You mustn't be surprised to hear it said that I'm ruined. Don't torment yourself too much; people always exaggerate. I'll sell what I have, and my debts will be paid. My honor will be safe; you needn't be ashamed of your father, never fear! I'll make good everything. I'm still young and strong. I'll raise my charge for portraits. My clients will have to pay more. In time I hope to get together enough to give you a suitable dowry, if you're not too much in a hurry to be married. In that case the doctor will make an advance."

"Oh, don't talk of me," cried Diana, "I've never thought of marriage, and I'm not occupied with what concerns me in the future. Let's talk of you yourself. Is this pretty town-house you love so much, which you have fitted up so well, where you are so comfortably settled, going to be sold? No, it can't be. Where would you work? And your country-house . . . Where would you live then?"

Flochardet, seeing that Diana was more distressed than he would have wished, tried to reassure her, saying that perhaps he would obtain new delays. But she was anxious because of the excessive labor that he was going to impose on

himself, and was afraid he would fall sick. She pretended to make herself easy, but this was to please him. She returned quite shaken and passed the evening indoors crying. She did not dare tell the doctor how grief-stricken she was. She dreaded to hear him blame and criticize her father. She played chess with her old friend, and then retired to her chamber to cry as much as she chose.

She slept little and did not dream at all. In the morning, she set to work as on other days. She sought to be diverted, but came back always to the cruel thought that Madame Laura would kill her father by means of overwork. It seemed to her that if her own mother had lived, Flochardet would have always been prudent and happy.

Then she mourned her mother in her heart, not like the first time when in grieving for her mother she had thought only of herself. She missed her now because of the happiness she could have given her father, and which she had taken away with her.

And as Diana drew mechanically without thinking of how her hands were employed, she called her mother from the depth of her soul; she said to her: "Where are you? Do you see what is taking place? Can you tell me nothing that I must do to save and console one whom another crushes and torments?"

Suddenly she felt as if it were a warm breath on her hair, and a voice faint like the morning breeze murmured in her ear: "I am here; you have found me."

Diana trembled and turned round; there was no one behind her. There was no other movement in her room than the shadow on the white-pine floor of the leaves of the linden-trees without, set in motion by the wind. She looked at her paper. A very delicate silhouette was sketched there.

It was she who had drawn it. She worked it out more and shaped the face, without attaching any importance to what she was doing. Then she massed the hair, in remembrance of the splendid cameo of which she had dreamed. She glanced indifferently at her sketch, while Geoffrette who had just come in went about the room setting it to rights.

"Well, my child," said the good woman drawing near, "are you pleased with your work, this morning?"

"No more than other days, my Geoffrette. I don't even know just what I've done . . . but what's the matter with you? You're pale, and your eyes are full of tears."

"Oh, good heavens!" cried Geoffrette, "how can it be? You can't have made this face? You've looked at the portrait? You've copied it?"

"What portrait? I haven't copied anything at all."

"Then . . . then . . . it's a vision, a miracle. Monsieur the doctor, come see, come see it! What do you say of it?"

"What's the matter?" said the doctor who came to get Diana to go to breakfast. "Why does Geoffrette cry out *miracle*?"

Then, looking at Diana's study, he added: "She has copied the face in the locket. But it's well done; it is, my child. Do you know that it's very well done? It's quite wonderful, and the likeness is striking. Poor young woman! I feel as if I were looking at her. Come, daughter, courage! You'll make better portraits than your father. This is beautiful and it's alive."

Diana, amazed, looked at her sketch, and recognized there the face of the cameo of her dream, the model she had preserved in her thought. But it was the work of her imagination, and without doubt the resemblance to her mother which Geoffrette and the doctor found there was a

fancy. She did not wish to tell them that she had never opened the locket. She feared they would make her open it, and she did not yet think herself worthy of this reward.

During breakfast, she asked her good friend, if he was quite sure that her portrait of her mother was a striking likeness.

"Why should I have recognized it," he said, "if it wasn't? You know very well that I'm not just saying it to be agreeable. Geoffrette," he added, "go get the drawing for me. I want to look at it again."

Geoffrette obeyed, and the doctor regarded it carefully again and again, while enjoying his coffee. He said nothing more. He seemed absorbed, and Diana asked herself anxiously if he was not reconsidering his first impression. At this moment, Monsieur Flochardet was announced, who came sometimes to drink coffee with the doctor.

"What are you looking at now?" he asked Monsieur Féron, after he had embraced his daughter.

"Look, yourself," replied the doctor.

Monsieur Flochardet bent over the sketch and turned pale.

"It is she," he said with emotion. "Yes, it's that dear woman of whom, without telling anyone, I think unceasingly, and now more than ever! But who did this portrait, doctor? It's a copy of the locket I gave you for Diana. But it's very much more expressive and better done. The likeness is more noble and truer. It's very remarkable and I haven't a single pupil capable of doing as well. Tell me who has done this?"

"It's . . . it is," said the doctor with a mischievous hesitation, "a little student of . . . of mine. Don't be annoyed because of that!"

Flochardet glanced at his daughter who had turned away towards the window to hide her emotion. He gave the doctor a look which was a question. Then he understood and brought back his eyes to the drawing with extreme surprise, seeking perhaps to find fault with something, but not finding anything to correct. He was in one of those states of mind when one is no longer so sure of oneself and is forced to admit that in the most serious things one can be mistaken.

Diana did not dare to turn round and was afraid she was dreaming. She leaned against the window to hide her emotion, without paying any attention to the sun which shone briskly on her head and which drove like ruddy needles its ruby rays into her eyes. In this dimness of sight, she saw a tall white figure, of marvelous beauty, whose greenish robe shone like emerald dust. It was the muse of her dreams; it was her good fairy, the veiled lady. But she did not have the veil over her face any more. It floated around her like a gold halo, and her beautiful countenance, that of the cameo seen in the dream, was exactly the one which Flochardet regarded on the paper.

Diana held out her arms towards this radiant face which smiled at her and said to her as it vanished: "You'll see me again!"

Diana, overcome with joy, fell into a chair in the window-recess restraining a glad cry. Flochardet and the doctor went to her thinking that she was ill. She reassured them without telling them of the vision she had just seen. She asked her father if he was truly a little pleased with her work.

"I'm not just pleased with it," he answered, "I'm delighted and quite upset. I make amends, my child. You have the sacred fire, and with that a knowledge of drawing very

much beyond your years. Go on without tiring yourself, work, hope, often distrust yourself. That helps. I don't question your talent any more and I'm very happy because of it!"

He embraced her with tears in his eyes. Then Flochardet asked his daughter to leave him to talk over business matters with the doctor. She went back to her room where she found herself alone, Geoffrette having gone to breakfast. Then Diana ran to her secretary and took from it the morocco box which she had tied with a black satin ribbon, so as not to be tempted to open it too soon. At last she opened it, knelt on a cushion and kissed the locket before looking at it. She closed her eyes to see again in her thought the ideal face which she had been promised she would see again. She saw it very clearly, and, sure of its consent, she finally looked at the portrait. It was indeed the same face she had drawn. It was the muse, it was the cameo, it was the dream, and it was her mother. It was reality found through poetry, sentiment and imagination.

Diana did not ask herself how the wonder came to pass in her. She accepted the event as it occurred, and did not try to find out why. Her reason would come in later to explain it. I believe she was quite right. When one is still very young, it is better to believe in loved ideals than to believe too much in oneself.

VIII

DISASTER

I SHALL not narrate to you day by day the two years which followed. Diana continued to work with courage and mod-

esty, asking often with a tender humility for her father's counsel. But he was not disposed every day to understand clearly what he himself had not been able to achieve. Without accounting for it to herself, Diana took a course entirely opposed to his. In the part of the country where she lived there were many beautiful relics of antique statuary. People were beginning to appreciate them, for French taste in general began to seek a new direction. Engraving spread and made popular the earlier discoveries in Herculaneum and Pompeii—paintings, vases, statues, furniture, articles of all kinds. An *elegant simplicity*, as they called it then, replaced the taste for knickknacks and the distorted in art. Italy was becoming better known. People traveled more, and if the beautiful coloring and the pleasant fantasy of Watteau were still appreciated, there was no less enthusiasm for Etruscan vases and Greek medallions. People did not quite go back to the taste of *the time of the Valois*, which we call today the period of the Renaissance. A new renaissance was attempted, less original, but yet charming. Furniture was made which we now call the *style Louis XVI*. It was called then furniture in the old style, and was handsome without being very well-finished. The women themselves began to lower their monumental styles of dressing the hair and to wear it, still powdered, fluffed out carelessly about their foreheads. The men curled their powdered side-locks, tying with a plain ribbon their long hair, formerly confined in a hair-bag. Some even caught it up in a braid with a tortoise-shell comb. Flochardet, in his studio, wore his hair dressed so, and made portraits showing attire much less elaborate than that which had brought him so much fame.

Therefore, it was not very surprising for his daughter, who began to attract attention, to dress herself even more

simply than was the fashion. People did not wonder how this vision of the past, this taste for that which was only beginning, had sprung up in her. But Flochardet became melancholy and took a distaste for his own skill. This awakening of the sense of form in art took him by surprise, for he had always managed to make the dress stand out. He discovered a growing decline in his popularity. He had tried to increase his charges at the moment when people were less disposed to pay him well. As he would have been humiliated to consent to a reduced price, he saw his patrons decrease rapidly. The talent of his daughter began to be known and valued. People were not afraid to tell him that he ought to have her help him; in case of need to have her replace him. Most certainly, the poor man was not jealous of the talent of his dear Diana. But, at any price, he did not wish her broad and fruitful studies to be interrupted in order to devote herself to the profession, to earn money to pay for the follies of Madame Laura.

During these two years which I sum up for you, the circumstances of the artist became very bad. He would have gladly saved all by energetic toil. He would have willingly been worked to death, but the thing which he had expected the least came about. He lacked work more and more. Unable to live more economically, Madame Laura had withdrawn her small fortune from the household, and had retired to Nîmes, to the home of her parents. There she stayed three-fourths of the year, only showing herself for short periods with her husband. She spent for new dresses the little she possessed, instead of turning it in to help her husband. Diana, seeing her father forsaken, sad and alone, had again taken up her residence at his house and divided her time between him and the doctor. Almost all the servants

were gone. Geoffrette cooked, and Diana set her hand to it so that her father, used to living well, would not notice the change. She brought order to the house and to the business. For a long time she held off the disaster by paying the interest on her father's debts. But a day came when the creditors, tired of waiting, made a seizure of the houses, the gardens, the little farm, the art-works and the personal property.

This was a very rude blow for Flochardet, who could no longer hide it from his daughter and his friends. He was resigned to abandon all and to seek in another province, not a new clientele; years are necessary for that, but any work whatsoever. He had already found some at Arles, in the churches. He made virgins, saints and angels, and at first he thought he would be able to give up portrait-painting. For a time he was cheered, thinking himself past-master in the technic of what he called the grand painting. But people's idea of virgins and angels had also changed; for a long time the smiling and plump madonnas of the time of Louis XV had been admired. Now they began to be preferred more serious, less like the pretty village nurses. There were many jests directed at the good little mammas whose heads Flochardet vainly encircled with a bright halo, scattered with roses perfectly painted. This mockery, which was kept from him by what was left of the respect formerly shown him, came to Diana's ears. She understood that her father could not make good his losses by this new attempt, and she entered the doctor's house one evening just as he was about to retire to his room. "My good friend," she said, "do you know that my father is ruined?"

"Yes, I know it," answered the doctor, "quite ruined!

He must have 200,000 francs, and no one is willing to loan them to him."

"But if someone would present himself as surety? . . ."

"What good would that piece of folly do? That would be 200,000 francs thrown away. Your father will never pay off his debts."

"You are doubtful of him?"

"No; but, as soon as he has got a little ahead, his wife will come back and ruin him."

"Buy, at least, one of the houses to satisfy the creditors. Let me live there with my father, and, some day, when he dies, you'll get it back. I have enough talent to make my living. I need so little that a very small portion of talent will suffice for me."

"You forget that your father is only fifty years old and I am seventy-five. If I buy his property and leave him the use of it, I'll never get back the interest on my money and shall die short of the cash. Is that what you want?"

"No, I'll pay you the rent. I'll work; my good fairy will perform a miracle for me. I'll earn money! Try it, my friend. Delay the sale of our property by being responsible for the payment, and you'll see that before two years . . ."

"It isn't so sure as that," said the doctor. "There's another solution, but it's very dangerous. I can at least buy you your father's town-house and all the art-works of the country-house. I'll thus enable you to save his home for him. You can rent a part of the large house and gain from it a yearly income to supply your needs. But here is what will happen: Madame Laura will come back to her husband and she'll manage to drive you away from your home by her bickerings. You'll not be able to endure that contest in which you have never wished to engage. You'll come back to me,

which will make me very happy, but your father will fall again under the yoke. His debts will pile up, for they will not live on the little revenue which the rents provide. Then, you'll abandon the property to save the honor of your name, your father will be quite as hard up as he is today, and you'll be without the dowry I wanted to settle on you. It will have disappeared to pay for your step-mother's furbe-lowed petticoats. You must know that I intend to divide my fortune between you and my nephew. What your father owes is just about equal to the half of my property. So if I save your father, I sacrifice your future; that is as certain as two and two makes four."

"Sacrifice it! It must be sacrificed!" answered Diana with a note of authority as if she had been one of those proud goddesses whose pure profile and beautiful figure she possessed. "You had never told me what you intended to do for me. Now that I know it, I'm set at ease. My father is saved. You can't advise me to abandon him to despair and misery in order to safeguard my future."

"It's all very well," said the doctor, "but my own present? my income, that is to say my well-being? I must now cut it in half, after tomorrow?"

"If you had arranged a marriage for me, would you not have done it?"

"I counted on your remaining near me, that we would live as a family. That way the expense would not have been so great. In return there would have been the domestic happiness, instead of your depriving me so that Madame Laura may live extravagantly . . ."

"Certainly," answered Diana, "there's nothing cheering in that. But I've thought it out. I'm determined to establish my authority in place of hers and I feel that I'll succeed.

I'll pay you the interest on the money which you entrust to me. Have faith in me, for if I adore my father, I also adore you. I'm not willing that you should suffer, however little, for the kindness you plan for me."

"Come!" said the doctor kissing her, "I'll think it over. Go to bed and sleep well. Whatever the risk and whatever happens, your father will be saved until further orders, since you wish it."

The next day, the town-house and the country-house put up at auction were bought in by Doctor Féron, but contrary to what Diana had expected he kept both of them for himself. He knew what he was doing, and was not willing to place her in the position of entering into a struggle with her father or of suffering loss through him. He knew Flochardet's weakness where his wife was concerned, and was furthermore unwilling to cause them to become reconciled. He did not confide in Flochardet at all. "My friend," he said, "I regret not to have been able to save you from this disaster. You're now dispossessed of all your property. However, since I've purchased it, you'll live in peace and out of debt henceforth. You'll live in your daughter's house, to whom I'm renting your house which is now mine. She will turn to account a large part of these fixtures which are of no use to you except to give balls and dramatics. Your clients, the two of you, will pay enough to cover your expenditures, for she counts on working at your side. While making progress, she'll bring back popularity to your studio. She doesn't flatter herself without cause that she can do this, for I know that public opinion is well-disposed towards her. If she had wished it she could already have had orders and success."

Flochardet thanked the doctor, but raised as an objection

that if his wife wished to join him, he would be forced to take up another abode.

"If that happens," answered Monsieur Féron, "she will accept that which your daughter, tenant of my house, offers you, the two of you."

"My wife will never consent to that! She's too proud. She'll assert, in explanation of living entirely separate from me, that I've no residence to offer her. She doesn't wish to owe anything to my daughter."

"That would be a very poor pretense, for she has something left. There's nothing to prevent her from paying board and lodging to her stepdaughter. That would be a way of contributing to the expenses of the household, a duty she spares herself a little too much."

Flochardet felt that the doctor was right. To tell the truth, his wife had made him so unhappy he could not regret her very much. His easy-going nature prevented him from considering as humiliating the position which was offered him. Charming and handsome, naturally confident, he hoped to regain his clientele and his independence, once he knew his debts were paid.

IX

RETURN TO PICTORDU

IN FACT, there was a return to Flochardet. In the provinces people hate doubtful situations. Besides, in the face of a possible bankruptcy, almost everyone is alarmed, because almost everyone finds himself more or less involved in it. When all was settled quickly, and the honest artist was seen, absolutely penniless, awaiting cheerfully before his canvas

the kind faces of his fellow-citizens, these faces arrived smiling. After a thousand tokens of esteem and interest more or less delicately expressed, he was set to work. Near him, at her easel, Diana awaited with calm and resolution for the children of these ladies and gentlemen to be sent to her. She had made known her choice of this line of work, so as not to poach upon her father's preserves. All the young generation of the town and the castles roundabout were brought to her, the hope of the families, the pride of the mothers. The series of little boys were almost all handsome, for it is not to be forgotten that Arles is the region of beauty.

Diana showed an extraordinary calm, but it was a rôle which the poor child played because she must. At heart, she thought herself too ignorant to do well. She still invoked, all grown-up that she was, the miraculous aid of her mother, the beautiful muse, for these two personages made but one in her thought.

The first time she tried her hand she hunted up in her secretary, the day before, an old relic which she had not looked at for a long time. It was the little head of the child Bacchus found at Pictordu. She had since then learned to understand it, and she found it even more charming than it had seemed at first. "Dear little Roman god," she said, "you have helped to reveal life in art to me. Inspire me, now! Teach me the secret of truth which a great unknown artist has put into you. I'm willing to be unknown as he is, if like him I leave behind something beautiful like you."

Diana did not yet attempt to paint. She commenced with pastel which was very much in vogue at this time. At once, she made one so remarkable and so charming that it was mentioned for twenty leagues roundabout. From that time on patronage came to her at the same time that it returned

to her father. The noble or middle-class families loved to encounter each other in this quiet studio where the father and daughter worked together, the one talking with the gay humor which years of melancholy or of anxiety had taken from him; the other, quiet and modest, not suspecting her beauty and conducting herself so as not to arouse jealousies. People remembered the giddy airs, the too fine toilets and the sharp manner of Madame Laura. They did not regret being rid of her. People had come there formerly to gossip; it was the smart thing to do. Now people came there to talk, and this was the well-bred thing to do.

At the end of a year, Flochardet and his daughter, having lived very modestly but without serious lack, found themselves able to pay their rent to the doctor. He received the money and invested it in Diana's name. In his will he had made her the heir of all his purchase, but he took care not to tell it. This was as much to safeguard Flochardet's dignity and to arouse Diana's courage, as to keep Madame Laura at a distance.

In spite of this cautious attitude, Madame Laura returned to the home when she knew the debts were paid and affairs were going well. She did not enjoy herself at all at her parents' home, for their means were small and they were careful of money. She saw almost no company and her beautiful dresses were of no use to her at all. So she came back, and Diana made a point of receiving her well. At first Madame Flochardet showed herself touched by this kindness, but soon she wished to introduce herself into the good company which frequented her husband's studio. Her presence produced a great pall there; her idle talk was no longer in season. People took ill the parading of her beautiful dresses and her jewels which she should have sold to

help pay the debts of the household. It was thought that she made herself too much at home, that she had an inconsiderate manner towards Diana, which was not becoming. She was made to feel that she was no longer pleasing to any one. She took offense, withdrew from the studio and tried to resume her outside connections. This was of no use; she was a star in eclipse and her beauty departed with her triumphs. Standards of conduct were becoming more strict. She was received in a lukewarm fashion and few of the visits which she made were returned.

Then she played the hypocrite to reëstablish herself, and, leaving off her rose-colored garments like the widow of Malbrough, she assumed the dress and the manner of a very devout person. As she was not sincere, she grew worse playing this rôle. She had only been selfish and frivolous; now she became envious and malicious. She spoke badly of everyone, ran down everything and destroyed the harmony of the family by her complaints, her touchiness, and the sharpness of her temper.

Diana endured it with an unchangeable gentleness. As her father had a lingering fondness for this frivolous woman, she performed the possible and the impossible to attach her stepmother to the life of the household. There was only one thing to which she would not give in. It was the wild desire which Madame Laura showed to put the household on its old footing. Counting on the money which her husband was again earning, she wanted the tenants sent away and society received as formerly. Diana held out and from then on she was treated as an enemy by her stepmother, called a tyrant, and denounced as stingy to whoever would listen.

Diana suffered much from this treatment, and many

times she was on the point of returning to the doctor's house to work there in peace. But she forbore, knowing that her father would be miserable without her.

One day, she received the visit of a young lady whom she recognized after but a moment's hesitation, so greatly was her memory developed with respect to faces. It was Madame the Viscountess Blanche de Pictordu, recently married to one of her cousins. She was still pretty, still poor and dissatisfied with her lot, but still proud of her name which she had the comfort of not having given up. She presented her young husband to Diana. He was a very silly lad, his face common and stupid. But he was a Pictordu, a true one, of the elder branch, and Blanche could not have understood that another might be more worthy of her.

In spite of this obstinacy in her ideas, Blanche had become more sociable. In all other respects, she had a certain wit, and she was very gracious to Diana, complimenting her on her talent and not pretending as formerly to belittle her profession. Diana saw her again with pleasure, her name and her person renewing the most charming childish memories. To induce her to come back, she asked her to let her do her portrait. Blanche became purple with pleasure, as when she had received the turquoise clasp. She knew she was pretty, and to see her face traced by a skillful hand was for her a perfect joy. "It's a favor I ask of you," Diana said, "To do a perfect countenance is for me a satisfaction which I don't have every day. As it's a difficult task, I make progress that way."

At heart, Diana was anxious to pay an old sentimental debt to the memory of Pictordu. Blanche could not understand this strange delicacy; she gave the credit for it to her charms. She let herself be urged a little and cited various

hindrances, although she was very much afraid of being taken at her word. She had only a few days to spend at Arles; her circumstances did not permit her to stay in an expensive place; her husband, busy with farming, urged her to return to the country where their life was fixed.

"I'll only make a light sketch of you," said Diana, "with three crayons: white, black and red. If I succeed, that will be very pretty, and I'm only asking a morning of you."

Blanche accepted for the next day, and arrived in a pretty sky-blue dress with the turquoise brooch fastened in her neck-ribbon.

Diana was inspired. She made one of her best portraits, and the viscountess found herself so pretty that there were tears of gratitude on the long black lashes edging her blue eyes. She kissed Diana and begged her to come and see her at her castle.

"The Castle of Pictordu?" said Diana surprised, "you told me you still lived with your father. Have you had the old mansion restored?"

"Not entirely," answered the viscountess, "that wouldn't have been possible for us. But we've restored a little pavilion and we'll move in there next month. There's a guest-room. If you'll make the first use of it we'll be very happy to have you."

The offer was sincere. Blanche added that her father would be happy to see her, as well as Monsieur Flochardet, whom he had always remembered kindly. He referred to the artist as *his friend Flochardet* when he heard people speak of the artist's beautiful works.

Diana had a strong desire to see Pictordu again, and she promised to make every effort to return there the following month, with or without her father. He had for a

long time urged her to take a little trip for a change, were it nothing more than to go and see at Mende her old aunt, the nun. Pictordu was not much off the route, and she would certainly go out of her way to visit it.

When Madame Laura knew that Diana was thinking of taking a little vacation she was in a bad humor. She had come to see clearly that Diana earned more than her father, that she was more valued as a painter and more loved. Her absence might compromise the interests of the household, and she made it so sharply felt that Diana was very much annoyed. She was bitterly grudged one or two weeks of liberty, she who, for two years, had given up everything and worked without rest to make good the disaster brought about by this useless and lazy person.

It must be admitted that the situation was difficult and that Diana had a great deal of courage to refuse the doctor's invitation to see Italy or Paris. He was ready to take her there if she desired it ever so little. Diana desired it passionately, but she was not willing to admit it, because she did not wish to yield to the temptation. She thought it was too soon, and that her father was not sufficiently on his feet again to get along without her for several months.

When she saw that, as thanks for her sacrifice, her right to absent herself a few days was disputed, she was on the point of becoming discouraged with her task. She stood out against her stepmother, answered gently that she would come back soon, and packed her bag, twenty times interrupted by the urgent objections of her stepmother. The doctor had to step in and decide that Diana should leave the next day with Geoffrette. He advised his dear child, laughing, to note her visions if she still had the good fortune to

have them, so that she could tell about them as agreeably as before.

It took two days to reach Saint-Jean-Gardonenque. Monsieur Marcelin Féron, the doctor's nephew, now himself a physician of great renown, resolved to accompany the two women to that town, where they spent the night. From there he went to visit one of his friends who lived in the vicinity while Diana, who had just had a joyful reunion with the honest postilion, Romanèche, took with her nurse the road to Pictordu. Some necessary repairs had been made to this terrible road, and in the afternoon our travelers arrived without accident at the foot of the castle-terrace.

The entrance was no longer there. The repaired pavilion, which was no other than the old *Bath of Diana*, had its entrance farther down. But Diana wished to see again by herself the statue which had spoken to her. She was afraid she could no longer find it. She sent Romanèche and Geof-frette on ahead, and, jumping over a little barrier recently put up, clambered up the uneven and broken steps of the great staircase.

It was about four o'clock in the afternoon and the sun began to light up objects with slanting rays. Diana, before discerning her dear statue through the shrubbery which hid it, saw its shadow project itself on the gravel of the terrace. Her heart beat fast with joy. She ran to the statue and regarded it with surprise. As she remembered it, it was gigantic, but, in reality, it was scarcely lifesize. Was the figure as beautiful as Diana had treasured her in thought? No, it was rather stiff and the folds of the garment were too elaborate and too liable to break. But it had elegance and grace in spite of everything. Diana who would have been broken-

hearted to scorn it, threw the lady a kiss, childishly disappointed that it was not returned to her.

The terrace was in the same state of neglect as formerly. The high grass was not trampled down. Diana saw that no one ever walked that way. She found out later that Blanche, who was very much afraid of snakes, treating the most innocent serpents as vipers, did not ever go into the ruins and did not permit any one else to go there. Diana was amazed, at the same time that she was glad of it, to see that the solitude and disorder which had charmed her before had not undergone any change.

She admired this tangle of bushy and dead trees, of magnificent wild plants and of plants formerly cultivated; this confusion of stones where the moss had invaded the natural and the hewn rock. She saw again the thread of clear water which had formerly fed the basins and the cascades, rippling along between the grasses and the pebbles. She regarded the elegant renaissance façade, where the live ivy entwined itself with the ivy-garlands carved into the stone. Some finely wrought windows, some towers, had perhaps disappeared. Diana did not remember these details very exactly. The castle still had that pleasant and noble aspect which the buildings of this brilliant period preserve, even in their ruin.

X

WHAT THE STATUE SAID

DIANA wished to find again by herself, through the ruins of the interior, the way to the pavilion, and she found it without difficulty. Blanche, warned by the arrival of the

carriage, ran towards her and welcomed her with a thousand endearments. She then bade Diana enter the pavilion of the baths where she had spent the night never to be forgotten. Alas, here all was changed. In the large round room, a sort of salon had been made from which the fish-pond had disappeared. The marble of it was cut to make the mantel-piece, and the garlanded vault was transformed into a sky of a hard blue. The nymphs, alas, did not dance their gay round on the wall. The salon, covered with hangings of orange cloth adorned with large bouquets, was now square, the cut-off parts serving to make small rooms.

The arched cloister had been cleared of its rubbish and its wild plants. The interior had become a kitchen-garden, and the spring, freed of its mint and hart's-tongue, disappeared under the curb-stone of a well. The chickens scratched in the rubbish of a little neighboring court, which was still paved with flagstones of porphyry. A lane of mulberry-trees newly planted, which did not seem to have quite made up their minds to accommodate themselves to the soil and to the climate, descended to the new road without passing through the old park, or through the ruins. The lords of Pictordu, in introducing themselves into a corner of their ancestral residence, had done everything possible to turn their backs on it and never to traverse it.

While admiring politely the account to which Blanche had turned this part of the castle, Diana sighed to think of the very different use she herself would have made of it. But Blanche seemed so satisfied with her arrangements, that Diana was very careful not to criticize anything. The marquis and his son-in-law arrived soon to sup. The son-in-law was red and sunburnt, calling his dogs, speaking in a jarring voice and giving vent to bursts of laughter after each sen-

tence, without one's being able to make out what he had said that was funny. The marquis was, as always, polished, warm-hearted, self-effacing, melancholy. He gave Diana the most amiable of welcomes; he had not at all forgotten her first visit. And then he overwhelmed her with strange questions which it was impossible to answer without entering into explanations such as one would give to a child. This good man lived so apart from the world, his horizon was so narrow, that, wishing to talk of everything so as not to appear too far behind the times, he showed that he no longer understood anything at all.

Blanche, keener, and a little more touched by the air of the outside world, suffered from the simplicity of her father and still more from the assurance with which her husband corrected him, proclaiming notions still more false. She contradicted them both with visible disdain. Diana missed the old solitude of Pictordu and asked herself why she had left the agreeable conversation of her father and the doctor, to listen to this dull trio which did not even have the merit of harmony.

She pleaded a little fatigue and retired early to the narrow room which her hosts honored with the title of guest-room. She could not sleep. A smell of fresh paint forced her to open wide her window. Then she saw that it looked out on a little staircase fixed aslant on the wall, which had been a part of the old structure. The night was beautiful and clear, and Diana wrapped herself in her cloak and descended. She was content to find herself alone and to set out, as before, to discover the marvelous castle of her dream. The beautiful muse whom she regarded as her good fairy did not come to take her by the hand. But she rebuilt in her thought this fairy-like villa, created in the heart of a



BLANCHE'S HUSBAND APPEARED, CALLING HIS DOGS

wilderness. She saw again in spirit the gayety of that vanished splendor which could no more revive in its ancient form. She did not meet any phantom during her walk, but she had a lively pleasure in seeing the beautiful effects of moonlight on the ruins. She could mount high enough on the strata of the cliffs which rose above the castle, to see the greenish-blue lights which the little river spread in the depth of the ravine. Here and there, a block which obstructed its bed outlined itself, a black mass in the midst of glittering diamonds. The screech owls called to each other with cat-like cries, the ferns exhaled their wild perfume. A deep calm prevailed in the air, the branches of the old trees were immovable, as sculptural as the stone-ornaments of the terrace.

Diana felt a need to review her short life in the midst of that nature which seemed absorbed in its thoughts of eternity. She saw again her infancy, her moments of earnest curiosity, her ailing languidness, her aspirations towards a mysterious ideal, her discouragements, her efforts, her success and her hopes. But there she stopped; her future was vague, mysterious, like certain phases of her past life. She was sensible of all that she lacked to go beyond the humble limits which she had accepted in coming to the aid of her father. She knew well that beyond the profession which assured independence and dignity there was a great treasure to gain. But could she ever enter into the conditions of this development? Could she travel, know, feel? shake off the persons about her, habit, and duties of each day, that barrier which her father might have been able to pass and at which he was halted to obey the demands of a wife who only saw in art the material gain?

Diana felt herself bound, impeded, broken, by this same woman with whom each hour the weak and vacillating spirit

of her father must be disputed. She had been but lately on the point of overwhelming her stepmother with scorn. She had kept her temper, for she had the self-control which her father lacked. When she felt herself close to an outburst, she also felt a hidden force which said to her: "You know that you must conquer yourself."

She remembered those moments of inner strife and thought of her mother who no doubt had bequeathed this hidden and precious force of patience. Then Diana eagerly begged this guardian spirit to show her the road in which her duty lay, as the face of the spirit had entered into her fancy to reveal beauty to her. Ought she to give up lofty satisfactions so as not to leave her father? Ought she to resist the voice of this maternal muse who had lifted her and carried her into the land of the beautiful and the true, in order to show her that way without an end on which the artist must not halt?

She thought of these things as she walked along, and she found herself close by the statue without a face, her first counselor. She leaned against the pedestal, and she seemed then to hear a voice which, if it came from the statue, was echoed by her own being. It said to her:

"Leave the care of your future to the maternal spirit who watches within you and over you; we two shall certainly find the way of the ideal. It is only a matter of accepting the present as a halting-place where, while resting, you are improving in spite of everything. Do not believe that a choice must be made between duty and noble ambition. These two things are made to go together, the one aiding the other. Do not believe either that conquered anger and trouble, bravely endured, are the enemies of talent. Far from exhausting talent, they develop it. Remember that in

bitter tears you found the face which you sought. Rest assured that, when you suffer bravely, your talent without your knowing it increases in proportion to your strength. Your powers do not grow in repose but in the overcoming of obstacles."

Diana returned to her room deeply moved by this inner vision, and no one could have slept better than she did.

The next day, she felt a delicious calm in all her being. She accepted without impatience the native simplicity of the good marquis and the heavy dullness of his son-in-law. She even communicated her good humor to Blanche and took her, a little reluctant, to explore the ruins in broad daylight.

The doctor had not limited himself to showing the beautiful in art to his dear Diana. He had also made her avail herself of beauty in nature, providing her with knowledge which made her walks interesting. He had charged her to bring back from her trip some rare plants which are peculiar to the Cévennes. Diana hunted for them and found them. She collected them carefully for her old friend, and also gathered for herself flowers less rare, but yet charming. While hunting for them, Diana picked up a piece of money, grown quite shapeless and covered with a thick coat of oxide. She delivered it over to Blanche, telling her to clean it carefully without scratching it.

"Keep it," replied the viscountess, "if you attach any value to these old half-farthings. I know nothing about them and I've many others I don't make any use of."

"You must show them to me," said Diana. "I don't know much about it, but I'll be able to pick out those which are interesting. With the help of Doctor Féron, who is very learned . . . who knows? I'm lucky, he says. Perhaps you possess, without knowing it, a little treasure-trove."

"I'll gladly give them to you, my dear Diana! They are all copper, very thin gold, or blackened silver."

"That doesn't prove anything. If there's something valuable among them, I'll tell you later and restore the value of it."

She saw the medallions collected by the marquis and thrown into a corner of his dwelling where it was difficult to find them again. Diana judged that they were not all without value, and charged herself with having them examined by competent persons. She did not want to clean the one she had picked up, fearing to spoil it. Diana attached I don't know what importance to having found it herself. Wrapping it up in paper she placed it in her trunk with the others.

The next day she went to view the sunrise from the top of the mountain. She was alone and walked at random. She found herself in a hollow of the rock, opposite a wonderful little waterfall which rushed sparkling and gladsome into the midst of the wild rose-bushes and the silky tufts of the clematis. The slanting sun sent a rosy ray on this exquisite detail of the picture, and, for the first time, Diana experienced the intoxication of color. As only the side of the mountain was lighted, she noted the magic animation of the light, more or less diffused and more or less reflected, passing from brightness to mildness, from glowing tones to cold tones, through indescribable harmonies. Her father had often spoken to her of neutral tones. "Father," she cried involuntarily, as if he had been there, "there are no neutral tones. I swear to you that there aren't any!"

Then she smiled at her excitement and leisurely drank in what was revealed to her from heaven and earth, from foliage and from waters, grasses and rock, from the dawn driving away the night, from the night retiring gracious and



DIANA COLLECTED RARE PLANTS FOR HER OLD FRIEND

docile, under the transparent veils which the sun sought to pierce. Diana felt that she would be able to paint without ceasing to draw, and her heart thrilled with hope and joy.

Returning, she stopped again by the statue and remembered what the evening before she had felt form itself in her soul. "If it is you who speaks to me," she thought, "you instructed me well yesterday. You made me understand that a good resolution is worth more than a fine journey. You told me to return smiling to the prison of duty. I promised you, and behold, today, I have made an intoxicating conquest in art. I have done better than to understand; I have felt, I have seen! I have acquired a new power. The light entered into my eyes as soon as the will to continue in my duty came back to me. I thank you, oh my mother, oh my fairy! I possess, thanks to you, the true secret of life."

Diana left Pictordu to spend two days at Mende. Then she returned home to apply herself again to her profession. At the same time, she began to paint without saying a word to anyone. She borrowed good pictures and she copied them every morning for two hours. She followed with attention the work of her father who still made sometimes for the churches plump virgins with heart-shaped mouths. By practice he had acquired much skill in handling the brush. Diana saw what he did and what he failed to do. She profited by his accomplishments and by his faults.

One fine day she began to do portraits; she painted children and created angels. It was perceived that she did very beautiful painting and her fame extended far and wide. Madame Laura felt that this stepdaughter, so disliked and so patient, was the goose who laid the golden eggs and must not be killed. She subsided, yielded, pretended to cherish Diana. In place of the true tenderness of which her heart

was not capable, she manifested respect and esteem. Madame Laura resigned herself not to scold Diana any more, and found herself very happy. She lacked nothing, and even had more than she needed, for Diana willingly deprived herself of a dress to give her stepmother one more handsome. Finally, she ceased tormenting the good Flochardet who, thanks to his daughter, became as wise and as happy as in the lifetime of his first wife.

One day, the Viscountess of Pictordu came to see Diana. After a thousand caresses and much beating about the bush, she asked if Diana had been able to turn the medallions to some account. The pavilion of the baths had cost more money to restore than had been expected, and her husband was very much embarrassed to pay a sum, small in reality, but large for him, which he had to borrow.

She added that if Diana still had an artist's passion for the ruins of Pictordu, she was resigned to be rid of them. She would transfer them to her with all the rocky part of the old park, for a very moderate price.

"My dear Viscountess," replied Diana, "if, some day, I'm in a position to desire it, I'll wait until you're really weary of the castle of your ancestors. You're by no means forced to make this sacrifice. I haven't forgotten your ancient coins. Some time was necessary to have them identified and a value put on them. I'm happy to tell you that there are three or four of them of value, especially the one I picked up. I was going to write telling you of the different offers the doctor has received from museums and from amateurs. Since you're here, you can consult Doctor Féron yourself. If you accept today the offers just as they have been received, you can realize a sum double that of which you're in need."

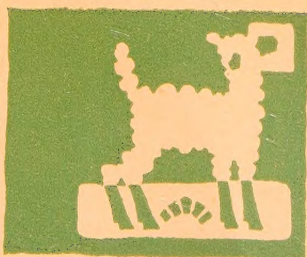
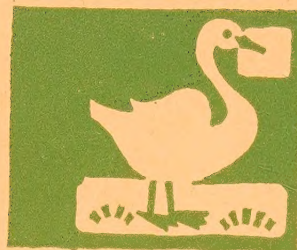
Blanche, astonished, threw herself on Diana's neck and called her a guardian angel. She came to an arrangement with the good doctor who had managed things very well, and quickly secured the proceeds of the sale. Blanche returned home full of joy after having begged Diana to come again to see her.

But Diana had nothing more to do at the Castle of Pictordu. She did not long to possess it materially. She possessed it in her memory like a vision dear and sacred which came to her when she wished. The fairy who had welcomed her there had left it to follow her away. This inspiration remained now with Diana, forever and in whatever place she went. The fairy built unnumbered castles, palaces filled with wonders. She gave Diana all she could wish for, mountains as well as forests and rivers, the stars of the firmament, as well as flowers and birds. Everything laughed and sang to Diana's soul, all gleamed before her eyes when, after a serious piece of work, she felt she had realized an improvement and had made a forward step in her art.

Need I tell you about the rest of her life? You guess it truly, children. This was an existence very noble, very happy and very fruitful in exquisite works. Diana, at twenty-five, married the doctor's nephew, that excellent adopted brother. He was a man of worth and had never thought of anyone but her. She then found herself rich and could do much good. Among other good works, she founded a studio for poor young girls, which she conducted without profit to herself. She took with her husband the fine journeys of which she had dreamed, and always returned happily to find again her country, her old friend, her father, and even her stepmother, whom she had come to love because she had forgiven her much. It is a law of noble natures to become

attached to what they have bravely endured. They hold to what has cost them much. Noble hearts love sacrifice, which is very fortunate for narrow natures. In reality, those who give and pardon know the highest joys, for in them the spirits and the fairies delight. Fairies only show themselves to the eyes exalted by enthusiasm and devotion.





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